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SLEEPING LIKE SPOONS

A Question of Embodiment

JOHN GILES MILHAVEN



The laity &
the life of faith
SANDRA H. JOHNSON

ELECTIONS:

Chicago: PRESTON GREENE

El Salvador: PATRICK LACEFIELD



REVIEWS

SUSAN CAHILL on Madeleine L'Engle

STEPHANIE G. GOULD & JOHN L. PALMER
on Poverty in the American Family

MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD on American Jews

ARTHUR J. MOORE on Alan Paton

The Sacred
and Siena

LAWRENCE S.
CUNNINGHAM

CORRESPONDENCE

Dismantling Eucharist

Brussels, Belgium

To the Editors: Thank you for publishing Gabe Huck's observations ["Why Settle for Communion?" January 27], about Communion services in place of Sunday Eucharist. He clearly points to a tragic development in the post-Vatican II church. Irony of ironies, the Roman Catholic tradition which for centuries struggled to maintain the reality, identity, and value of the eucharistic celebration has now begun systematically to dismantle the practice and ignore its own most solemn teachings. With hardly a whimper our church leadership has surrendered to the quick-fix solution of a superficial Western pragmatism. It has announced to the world a new Roman Catholic teaching: that clerical celibacy is a religious value superior to Eucharist.

JOHN APPLESEED

Reprint it widely

Joliet, Ill.

To the Editors: Your editorial on the Vatican document on Catholic education ["Loading the Blunderbuss," January 27] should be reprinted across the nation. You are right in saying that Catholic educators "owe it to themselves" to make their positions known to church authorities. Catholic education in our country is at a point that history will probably call a critical "watershed." The miracle of American Catholic education has been that, while it began with the emphasis on "Catholic," as an attempt to safeguard young Catholics from the contamination of secularism and thus prepare them for survival in the cruel melting pot where their parents and grandparents were looked on as foreign freaks, the "education" component was really given a thorough grounding. As an educator myself, I can assure you that it has become axiomatic among college profs that a student from Catholic grade school and high school knows more about grammar and spelling

and neatness (all essentials in the process of writing) than any ten of his or her counterparts from the public system. This might be less true today than it was ten years ago, but it still holds sway.

For those who think that "Catholic education" is an oxymoron like "military intelligence," etc., I would offer not only the evidence of Aquinas, Augustine, and Bonaventure, and the history of the Jesuits and Christian Brothers, but also the evidence of what Catholic education has done in this country and is still doing. If the Vatican persists in trying to incarnate the worst stereotype of Catholic block-headed intransigence, Catholic educators are going to be forced to choose between "Catholic" and "educated," two terms which *should* be complementary (if not synonymous), but which the Vatican would make, will-nilly, antithetical.

It has been a long personal struggle, but I have come to believe...yes, *believe*...that faith and reason serve each other well. What a grim irony that it should be the Vatican which undermines that belief! And if the Catholic hierarchy can tell us what "education" means, who's to tell us finally what "Catholic" means?

WARREN R. CARLIN

The missing theme

Champaign, Ill.

To the Editors: Lawrence S. Cunningham was right, I think, to begin his "Religious Booknotes" in your Contemporary Theology Issue [January 27] with some remarks about what I take to be one of the best works of theology published in years: *God Matters*, by Herbert McCabe. (The title is, by my count, a triple pun.) He may even be right that "the best essays in the book are the three long meditations [on] Holy Week"—essays that are thoroughly theological and not simply "devotional,"—but I think he has neglected a most important theme in the book. That is McCabe's contention, set out in detail in the long essay, "The Class Struggle and Christian Love," that Christianity and

capitalism are incompatible.

This is, after all, the nub of the matter between liberation/political theologies on one side and the Cardinal Ratzingers of this world on the other. While noisy campaigns—well-financed, not surprisingly—defend the alliance between capitalists and some Christians in the name of "tradition," those who are truly attentive to the Catholic tradition, such as McCabe and many liberationists, get less of a hearing. It is regrettable, for instance, that this book has not found an American publisher—it is available only in an expensive British edition—and that the editing is so badly done that the exclusivist language of the earlier essays is retained.

Terry Eagleton (who dedicated his last book to McCabe) has recently written that "the Roman Catholic church contains two major currents...: a lineage of rigorous doctrinal thought, and a tradition of ethical and social concern.... At the best, they can blend to incline those brought up within them to the political left." It is so
(Continued on page 221)

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters should not exceed 250 words and are subject to editing for clarity and space limitations.

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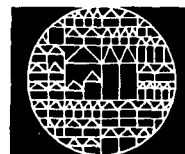
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COMMONWEAL



Carnage control

This past January, children in Stockton, California, were playing unperturbed in a schoolyard at recess when a ripple of bullets splayed out with no warning. Five died and twenty-nine others plus a teacher were wounded. They had been ravaged by shots from a high-powered semi-automatic rifle, once a weapon of war. At about the same time, in nearby Oakland, a surgeon at the Highland Hospital stood before a patient whose head had been grazed by a bullet. "With a .22 or a .38, he would have been home the next day," the doctor said. But this bullet, fired from an assault rifle, had such velocity that the shock waves, not a direct hit, swelled the victim's brain. He died within hours. In the most violent corners of our inner cities, where gangs are at war and guns are imported along with huge shipments of cocaine, it is horrible, yet predictable, that innocent bystanders are caught in crossfires over drugs.

Doctors, faced with increasing numbers of assault rifle injuries, describe their work as "trench medicine" and their wards as "MASH units": their patients have blood losses that strain hospital reserves, mangled organs that cannot be sewn up, and pulverized bones that cannot be set.

The nation's police forces, having lost too many officers to criminals armed with automatic and semi-automatic rifles, have begun to augment their service revolvers with custom-made, concealable submachine guns, in *self-defense*. In turn, individuals, increasingly fearful that the police cannot protect them, have been arming themselves.

The domestic arms race has been escalating.

Semi-automatics release only one shell per trigger pull, but they rapidly fire multiple rounds of ammunition as long as the trigger is squeezed and are powerful enough to perforate a concrete wall from a distance. The sale and possession of semi-automatics are not only legal, in some states the weapons are easier to come by than a driver's license. Worse, they can be converted into fully automatic weapons. Although conversion is illegal and carries stiff penalties, semi-automatics can readily be transformed (in some models, by inserting a match or a nickel) into fully automatic machine guns—capable of firing hundreds of rounds at one pull of the trigger.

But children in a schoolyard fired on with a combat weapon? This was too much. California's "playground massacre" seems finally to have galvanized the public and politicians to action on carnage control, if not yet on gun control.

Until March 14—when the Bush administration temporarily banned imports of some models—there were no federal restrictions for citizens on buying and selling assault weapons. After two previous failed attempts, California has finally passed bills in both its assembly and senate to ban semi-automatics and register those already sold. When a joint bill is passed, California will be the first state to outlaw assault rifles. Colt Industries announced it would stop selling AR-15s, its civilian model of

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a military weapon recently adopted by drug gangs. State-by-state restrictions, however, will not suffice and Colt's competitors will continue to manufacture these weapons. Sales by mail and across state borders will continue and are virtually impossible to control without strict federal standards.

What is hindering the development of stringent controls? Leadership. And an American fantasy.

After the Stockton killings, President Bush—a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association—said he opposed banning semi-automatic firearms: “I’m not about to do that....The states have a lot of laws on these things, let them enforce them.” By March, he was feeling “a pulse change,” and seeing the possibility of an “accommodation” between sportsmen and police “who put their lives on the line every single day.” He denied that the temporary ban on imported semi-automatic assault rifles was a reversal of his earlier position, pledging a decision made “in a cool way, based on facts and not swayed one way or another by the temper of the debate.” Is it only a curiosity of Mr. Bush’s rhetoric that an accommodation between the police and hunters might count as a fact, but not the lives of innocent children and ordinary citizens? We think Hugh Brock of Brock’s Army Surplus in Decatur, Georgia (also a lifetime member of the NRA) has got his priorities a little clearer. He is not angry at the president over the ban: “He has to be everybody’s president, not just the NRA’s president.” Well said, Mr. Brock.

But George Bush, sportsman and president, is only part of the problem. The political clout of the NRA is legendary and it rests not just on successful political lobbying, lots of money, and appeals to the constitutional right to own and bear arms, but on the bedrock fantasy of too many Americans that all else failing—reach for your gun. The “playground massacre” has pulled that instinct up short—at least for the moment.

Congress and gun control forces should seize the moment to introduce stringent measures against assault weapons and to bring arms control to our domestic battlefields. Controlling the sales of all guns—by requiring waiting periods, checking buyers’ records, and licensing owners only for legitimate purposes of self-defense or hunting—would go a long way in reducing the level of violence in drug-infested neighborhoods, domestic quarrels, and all those situations when Americans find it easier to shoot first and talk later.



More important, the national psyche needs a serious talking to by victims of our unwarranted approval of guns: James Brady, who took a bullet in the head in the 1981 attempt on Ronald Reagan’s life; policemen permanently disabled in gun battles; the parents of the children gunned down in Stockton. Controlling guns and their owners is not the same as banning them. It’s about time that Congress and state legislatures made that clear to the NRA; they are everybody’s lawmakers, not just the NRA’s.

A BLASPHEMING CANCER

Tolerance, fraternity, solidarity. Three words worthy of a revolution; three words that resonate from “The Church and Racism,” the timely and relatively concise (8000 words) statement on racism issued in February by the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission. Three words meant to help battle a worldwide cancer.

Is another statement on racism necessary? In China, black is not beautiful. In Azerbaijan, Armenians beware! In Amazonia, where have the Yanomami Indians gone? In David Duke’s victorious race for the Louisiana legislature, white is right. Across the United States there is the growing phenomenon of “skinheads,” young nihilists whom the Southern Poverty Law Center describes as “the most indiscriminately violent group of white supremacists in decades.” In West Berlin, neo-Nazis win eleven seats in the city parliament and two in the national parliament. In South Africa, the white Dutch Reformed church cannot finally agree that apartheid is a sin. In Soweto and the West Bank, the word endures: “You are not worthy.” Yet the year is 1989.

So this statement, this indictment, from the Vatican is timely and necessary. What is more, so is its uncommon directness, crisp, like the speech of its Basque author, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray. It deals with both the structures of institutionalized racism and the snarled corridors of the individual heart. It challenges the church as well as the world. (Unfortunately, it does not adequately acknowledge the church’s own systemic historic failures, but puts the onus largely on individual church members. While it calls on the church to live up to its mission to be a sign of universal reconciliation, it misses an opportunity to square its own history with this compelling insight.) In light of recent church teaching, particularly the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* and the 1979 pastoral letter of the bishops of the United States (“Brothers and Sisters to Us”), the document points out that there is little difference between those who exploit others because of race and those who exploit others because of class, economics, or national origin. It forthrightly denounces anti-Semitism in all its strains. Finally, it pronounces unequivocally that racial prejudice is a sin that blasphemes the Creator.

Practically, the document notes that acts of racism must be exposed, denounced, and its victims defended. In this country,

a number of groups over the years have consistently defended the rights of the racially and religiously oppressed. Thus it was no surprise that while the Vatican was issuing its statement, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith was releasing its own audit of anti-Semitic incidents for 1988. The figures are clearly disturbing: a 41 percent increase in reported cases of anti-Semitic harassment, and an 18.5 percent increase in anti-Jewish vandalism last year alone. But the report does not stop simply with "its own." It notes a spreading "decline in civility" in American society, one that demeans blacks, homosexuals, the homeless, and women, and tests the very limits of human civility.

Testing the limits. Perhaps the most prescient aspect of the Vatican document is its warning about "new and as yet unknown forms of racism." While in this instance the document is concerned concretely with processes of genetic manipulation, recalling specifically the eugenic racism of the Nazis, its intuition is much broader and anticipatory. It has peered into the future and seen signs of a forbidding new world. Like much of the document, this section deserves additional reflection, further study and development, and committed response.

Racism has an infinite number of masks, but always the same face. The message the church preaches is a strong and potentially enriching one: "Every person is my brother or sister," and all acts of discrimination must be denounced vigorously and immediately. But as the church should have learned when it condemned Nazi racism in 1938, denunciations themselves will never be enough.

ET CETERA

FORTIFY YOUR FOREARM From *National Defense*, a monthly journal specializing in military technology, we learn of progress made by Fabrique Nationale (FN), a Belgian arms manufacturer, with its Project 90, a new concept in the field of "personal weapons." The requirements FN sought, says the report, were "increased incapacitation, optimized target acquisition, improved hit probability, and affordable first and maintenance costs. The ammunition had to have an optimized drag coefficient, optimized projectile design, minimum weight and maximum velocity giving high loss of energy into soft targets, greatly increased perforation effect, a low recoil impulse for maximum control, and maximum operator comfort."

The result: "[A] very small submachine gun firing an entirely new 5.7mm cartridge.... The weapon is formed from plastic, with a kind of thumb-hole stock which allows a good grip while holding the weapon along the crook of the elbow.... There is a reflex sight which...appears to allow aiming from the hip.... [Thus] it would make an excellent 'instinctive' weapon, since it would virtually become part of the man's forearm.... The 5.7mm bullet will defeat a standard steel helmet at 150 meters."

With optimized incapacitation, increased perforation effect, and high loss of energy into soft targets, it sounds perfect for schoolyards.

REPORT FROM EL SALVADOR

THE WAR CONTINUES ARENA WINS FOR NOW

It is Saturday March 11. Ruben Zamora is hurting. He has a shooting muscular pain in his shoulder that slices toward the nerves whenever the Toyota land cruiser bounces on the blacktop byway between El Salvador's capital of San Salvador and the eastern city of San Miguel. But that isn't his only problem.

As we speed past volcanos and verdant coffee plantations huddled beneath their base, Zamora, the Convergence campaign coordinator, is disturbed by a communique issued the day before by the FMLN guerrillas. They have called for a boycott of the elections or the casting of a blank ballot. More seriously, they have decreed a transportation stoppage to begin the following Thursday and to last through election day, March 19. While they had a few good words for their erstwhile allies in the Convergence, their call for a boycott had come without warning.

When the FMLN proposed in late January to postpone the March 19 elections until September, to keep the army in their garrisons during the elections, and to give the vote to the hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans living outside the country, the FMLN clearly thought that given those conditions, the Convergence could win. "If the postponement is accepted," said FMLN leader Nydia Diaz to President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica in mid-February, "the Convergence would transform itself into an absolute majority." Going further, Diaz opined that the FMLN is "the political majority in the country."

Something very different happened on election day. The rightist Arena party, playing by the somewhat democratic rules, stunned observers by winning more than half the votes, obviating the need for a runoff. How did they do it? True, voter turnout was down, but abstentions and null ballots—nearly 13 percent in last year's Assembly elections (won by Arena)—were barely 3 percent this time around. The Convergence, which had hoped to crack double figures, limped in with just over 4 percent of the vote. Arena ran a \$4 million advertising campaign that gave new meaning to the term "saturation media."

They mobilized 24,000 poll-watchers, all decked out in vests of red, white, and blue horizontal stripes, to watch 6000 polling places.

At what point does excellent organization and presence at the polls cross over into intimidation? From my observations at a couple dozen polling places, I can report that Arena folks were often pushy and aggressive, "advising" people how to vote or positioning themselves close to the ballot box to catch a look at preferences. That's not the whole story, though. As one Convergence worker in the small town of El Congo in Santa Ana province told me, "you'd have to be suicidal to vote for the

Convergence here” because if anyone found out you’d be marked as a guerrilla sympathizer. Indeed, at the polling place in Chalchuapa, “Don’t vote for the thieves and murderers of the Convergence” was painted on the pavement in front of the polling place. Two days before the elections, and under the watchful eyes of the military, hammer-and-sickle posters went up in the capital with photos of Convergence candidate Guillermo Ungo, Zamora, and FMLN leader Joaquin Villalobos, conveying the message that the Convergence and the FMLN were one and the same.

The efforts of both the Convergence and the Christian Democrats (PDC) to turn out their vote were severely hampered by the transportation stoppage. Guerrilla attacks in two dozen towns on the morning of the voting, coupled with ongoing military operations, insured a low turnout (900,000-plus out of 1.8 million eligibles), which helped Arena. “The FMLN doesn’t want either Arena or the PDC, because both will continue the war,” said FMLN leader Ana Guadalupe Martinez. “But if the PDC wins, they’ll continue to receive the millions that Washington sends to fight against us.” The FMLN, however, miscalculated. Arena’s absolute majority on the first round will give them bragging rights to a U.S. Congress likely to believe, until shown otherwise, that Arena represents a more moderate right.

The U.S. Embassy hailed the balloting as a wonderful exercise in democracy. The message: The U.S. has spent \$3.6 billion here in the last decade and things are going well. The number of guerrillas is half what it was, the military has become more professional, and a fragile democratic culture is in place that allows for the orderly transfer of power among civilians.

In fact, the U.S. Embassy remains the leading power in El Salvador, followed by the military, and only then by the civilian government. The embassy would have preferred a government led by the Christian Democrats willing to sign off on the U.S. counterinsurgency project yet possessing the veneer of a proper social base and reform credentials (somewhat tattered, of late). The PDC campaign never really got moving under former Planning Minister Fidel Chavez Mena. Chavez Mena gives a good protest speech, but Salvadorans could not forget that he was the candidate of the corrupt and inefficient ruling party. Arena didn’t so much win this election as the PDC lost it.

Ironically, it was U.S. policy itself as played out over the last five years that crippled President José Napoleón Duarte and his party by stonewalling serious efforts at a negotiated settlement with the rebels and pressing him to accept an economic austerity package in 1985-86 that undercut his trade union and peasant base.

Since 1980, power has been vested, with U.S. blessings, in the Christian Democrats. In the view of the Salvadoran right, however, this has been “Washington-directed” socialism and

revolution on the installment plan. “Duarte, Ungo, Zamora—all are in it only to prepare the way for the takeover of Marxist-Leninism,” stated one columnist in a leading Salvadoran daily. In the view of the right, Duarte has nationalized banking and the lucrative export trade, promulgated an inefficient agrarian reform and—in the process—fueled the PDC with government resources.

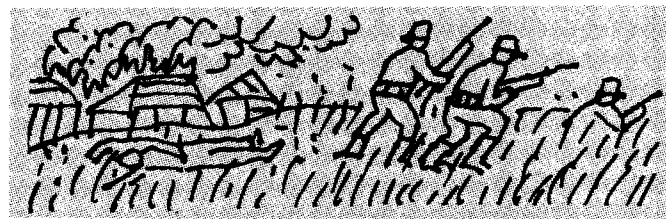
The U.S. first thwarted Arena in 1982 when it imposed Alvaro Magana as provisional president over death-squad architect Roberto D’Aubuisson. Then, in the 1984 presidential balloting, the U.S. funneled nearly \$2 million to Duarte against D’Aubuisson. Arena has learned its lesson. Their candidate this time was Alfredo (“call me Freddy”) Cristiani, a wealthy, smooth-talking, Georgetown-educated coffee-grower, who waged an effective campaign against Christian Democratic corruption, economic deterioration, and the continuing war. He promised to talk with the FMLN about peace, revive the economy by giving free rein to the “productive sector” (as the oligarchy arrogantly dubs itself), and root out the kind of skimming that allowed \$24,000-a-year PDC ministers to buy million-dollar houses.

Which is the real Arena? There are three strata within Arena. The first, where the levers of power are located, is where Roberto D’Aubuisson presides. The second is for the likes of Cristiani and other respectables who’ll swear that Arena is just like the U.S. Republican party with its conservatives, moderates, and liberals. The third level encompasses the folks on the ground—who’ll slap up a poster or slap down an opponent depending on what’s called for at the time. The first level communicates with the second and vice versa, but the second level doesn’t communicate with the base, as shown by the slogan among the fresh-faced, upper-middle class Arena volunteers: “Cristiani to the Government, D’Aubuisson to Power.”

The U.S. claim of having turned the corner on the military conflict is hollow indeed. The guerrillas are active in thirteen of El Salvador’s fourteen departments and have the capability to strike almost at will within the capital itself. The week before the balloting was marked by continuous sabotage against water service, electricity, and transport.

The military are second-in-command after the U.S. It was they who had the last word in turning thumbs down on the proposed election postponement. On election day they were omnipresent in all voting places. When the Salvadoran military says that they are “above” politics, they mean no matter who wins, they still call the shots, with the appropriate bow in the direction of the embassy to insure that aid keeps flowing. The name being bandied about for Defense Minister in the new Arena government is Air Force General Rafael Bustillo, a hard-liner who was involved in the Nicaraguan *contra* resupply effort and is an ardent supporter of air power.

For the FMLN, a tragic fantasy may have been born of the campaign and election. It lies in the FMLN’s belief that an Arena government will sow the seeds of a massive insurrection later this year. “Maybe the objective conditions are present in the deterioration of the economy,” said one Salvadoran observer, “but the subjective conditions just don’t exist. People aren’t going to rise up.” A member of the Convergence was



blunter: "They don't have half the possibilities that existed with the 'final offensive' in January, 1981. That was a fiasco. They'll be walking people into a propeller blade."

There is little question that an Arena government will lean heavily in the direction of a free-market model, meaning harder times for the bottom 85 percent of Salvadoran society. Though critical of PDC's use of government resources for party purposes, Arena will undoubtedly continue the practice joining its clout in the public sector with its near unanimous support in the private sector. Given Arena's total lack of support from organized labor, look for additional strictures limiting strikes by permitting militarization of workplaces. Ex-Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa, now the swashbuckling vice-president of the National Assembly, has promised that Arena will give the military what it needs to maintain "order" and carry on the war.

For now, the U.S. government has assured Salvador that aid will continue. Bush has proposed \$386 million for this fiscal year, with \$97.6 million of that strictly for the military, even though—believe it or not—the Salvadorans have yet to spend any of the military aid in last year's pipeline. The Bush administration says that all this depends on the human rights situation and the continuation of the reforms in some fashion. Of course, they want to make that judgement rather than leaving it up to a Congress with higher standards on such issues. On this kind of scrutiny will depend the continued existence of some modicum of political space in El Salvador—space for political forces like the Democratic Convergence.

"I don't know about the future," my friend Jorge told me, the day after the balloting as we were waiting for a meeting of Convergence party members with Ungo. At the age of thirty-two, Jorge had already had fifteen years of political work and two years in exile. He knew too well the smell of decomposing flesh as he searched for comrades killed and dumped by the side of the road in the seventies. He'd been tortured himself by the National Guard.

"See these people," he waved across a sea of folding chairs being filled by comrades settling in for the meeting. "We've done the best we could with a difficult situation. We've built an organization to continue the struggle. Two years from now he may be dead, she may be with the guerrillas, they may be in exile. All I know is that six months ago there wasn't the courage to have a meeting like this, much less the courage to call D'Aubuisson an assassin in public or denounce the military in a small town square for betraying the people. That counts for something."

There are moments when your heart wells up, the eyes tear over, and your cynicism drops away. This moment for sharing defeat and victory was one of those rare times.

PATRICK LACEFIELD

Patrick Lacefield, who worked for two years in El Salvador as director of a rural development project of the local Catholic church, was a member of the observer team of the Socialist International for the recent Salvadoran elections. He is coauthor of El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War (Grove Press) and national organizational director of the Democratic Socialists of America.

REPORT FROM CHICAGO

RACE AFTER WASHINGTON BEIRUT ON THE LAKE

Though some analysts date the decline of black political power in Chicago to Acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer's defeat by State's Attorney Richard M. Daley in the February mayoral primary, it actually began the very night Sawyer was catapulted into the mayor's seat, December 1-2, 1987. On that long night, the Chicago City Council assembled for nearly twelve hours in the most extraordinary session in its history, to choose a successor to the late Harold Washington, laid to rest barely twenty-four hours earlier.

The stakes were extremely high: Would Washington's recent, yet unconsolidated "reforms" survive or be subverted? It was clear that Alderman Tim Evans, Washington's floor leader and trusted confidante, was the appropriate choice to carry forward the "Washington legacy."

Yet the forces of reform were outmaneuvered. Recognizing the impossibility of choosing a "white ethnic" successor, the old guard got the next best thing: a black who could "play ball" with the machine, Eugene Sawyer. Chicago blacks, and the progressive coalition that twice elected Harold Washington, lost more than a mayor when he was felled by a massive heart attack. They lost a chance to alter permanently the political landscape of the city by continuing Washington's efforts to "reform" the city's politics in structural, not merely symbolic, ways.

Most other cities have long since abandoned the most blatant abuses associated with "big-city machine politics," and at least pay lip service to the credo of good government: efficiency in government, civil service and merit selection of municipal employees, ethics ordinances for public officials, and minimal adherence to ethnic and racial equality in drawing up of electoral districts.

In Chicago these elementary "reforms" have been the basis of long and costly court battles, and highly polarized election campaigns. With his surprise victory in 1983, Washington vowed to destroy the machine once and for all, and for the old guard, those were fighting words. And fight, they did.

For three-and-a-half years, Washington was effectively prevented from governing by the old guard's 29 votes (to his 21) on the city council and stifled in his attempts to make appointments to some of the most crucial municipal departments by the "29," led by Alderman Edward Vrdolyak, affectionately known in Chicago as "Fast Eddie." It was during this period that the term "Council Wars" was coined, and the *Wall Street Journal* referred to Chicago as Beirut on the Lake....

In selecting Eugene Sawyer over Tim Evans, the old guard achieved several objectives, especially dividing the black community. Contrary to what many believed, the support of the

black leadership for Washington was never monolithic. Washington was a reformer; most of the black leadership was not. To them, his election meant Chicago would have a black Daley. During Washington's tenure, they were effectively controlled and silenced. So vast was Washington's influence with blacks that a mere hint from him that an alderperson was frustrating his wishes spelled political death for the offender.

But it was Washington's actual death that opened vast new opportunities for the unreconstructed, white ethnic old guard and their heretofore silent black allies. With the support of this unholy alliance, the kind and gentle, but hapless Eugene Sawyer was pushed onto the stage as the city's Acting Mayor. Sawyer, to his credit, was a reluctant bride in this misalliance. At the very moment he was to meet his constituents, he was greeted by such a burst of public outrage, almost Elizabethan in its vulgarity, that he collapsed, and had to be rushed back into the inner sanctum for some serious talking with the masterminds of the coup. He never gained the esteem of the citizenry. For weeks after his selection, he was referred to by whites as "Mayor Mumbles" in acknowledgement of his limited oratorical gifts. Blacks simply called him "Uncle Tom Sawyer."

For all of his trouble, Sawyer was not even allowed to serve the balance of Washington's term. The courts ordered a special election, as state law seemed to require, and the old guard abandoned Sawyer and fielded three candidates of their own, all of whom quickly withdrew once the disinherited prince, Richard Daley, announced his intention to run against Sawyer in the Democratic primary.

In the meantime, Tim Evans set up a third-party candidacy for the general election on April 11, which he seems destined to lose. Unless...unless, Fast Eddie Vrdolyak—the Count Dracula of Chicago politics, as the *Chicago Tribune* calls him, arch foe of Harold Washington and Richie Daley, succeeds in derailing Daley. Vrdolyak, the "Instant Republican" and even more instant Republican mayoral candidate, has already done the

impossible. After weeks of resisting the pleas of his new Republican allies to run for Mayor, he decided just four days before the February primary to launch what seemed to be a long-shot, write-in campaign. To the surprise of the entire political establishment, he won, bringing panic to the Daley camp, dismay to Republican Governor Jim Thompson, and tears of joy to Evans, who sees a split in the ranks of the old guard, and the white vote, as his only hope of repeating Washington's squeaker victories in '83 and '87.

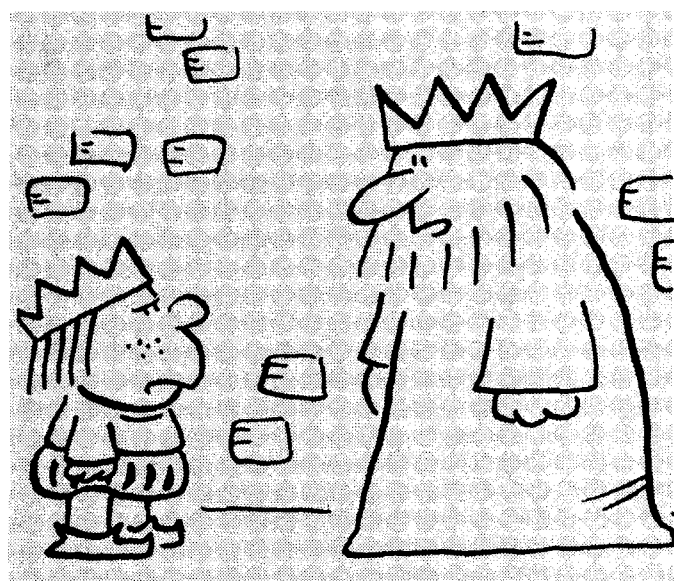
But an Evans victory is unlikely. While the bulk of blacks strongly support him, some middle-class blacks and most of the black political establishment, including Jesse Jackson, are decidedly lukewarm. They are angered at his self-righteous refusal to endorse Sawyer, even after he (Evans) had dropped out of the primary and formed his own third party for the general election. After Sawyer lost in the Democratic primary and announced his decision to remain neutral in the election, much of his staff announced their support for Daley.

Evans, a child of the black bourgeoisie (his father was a lawyer as is he, and his wife, a physician), is seen by liberal and thoughtful whites as a captive of militant blacks—an image that is partly the result of unfair media coverage and partly of his inability to rein in his most vocal and militant supporters the way Washington could. Furthermore, Evans's slow response to the anti-Semitic diatribes of former Sawyer aide, Steve Cokely, severely damaged his credibility with Jewish voters.

A great deal is at stake. Chicago blacks have gained actual and effective, not merely symbolic, control of crucial governmental agencies. The Chicago school system (both the superintendency and the school board itself), the park system, the Chicago Housing Authority, the Library Board, the Police Department, and numerous lesser agencies are under black control. Harold Washington's true legacy was the glimmer of hope he gave to the city's underclass. The danger that black Chicagoans face is not the temporary loss of power caused by Daley's probable victory, but the loss of hope among those most in need of it. If those blacks most victimized by crime, drugs, and senseless violence lose faith in the system, all Chicagoans will ultimately pay the price in higher taxes to provide the essential services of a community chronically unable to provide for its most basic needs; in greater personal insecurity, as the underclass continues its descent into criminal behavior as the only visible means of economic survival; and in a shrinking economic base, as the private sector refuses to invest in a city where increasing numbers of its residents are functionally illiterate.

For black activists who fought for decades to reform the city and bring a long-needed measure of power to their community, the future seems bleak. Yet, a deeper look at political realities suggests some reasons for hope. Changes in the city's economic infrastructure, the increase in black and Hispanic political power, the Shakman Decree (outlawing political patronage), and the social and economic problems facing the city, make a return to the machine-ruled practices of the past impossible.

While blacks may not get as receptive a mayor as Harold Washington, they will continue to be a potent force. Their



"I know you don't agree with me now, son, but you will when you have absolute power."

influence will be felt unless they continue the sectarian and reductionist politics of this campaign.

PRESTON GREENE

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NONPROFIT HOUSING

LOCAL SUCCESS STORIES

WILL HUD'S KEMP SIGN ON?

A backyard revolution has been taking place in inner cities and rural areas of the United States: nonprofit and community-based groups have been building and renovating affordable housing on a scale much broader than in the past. Since the late 1800s, settlement houses, labor unions, and wealthy philanthropists have built apartment houses and cooperatives for working-class families. But in the 1980s, the nonprofit housing movement has burgeoned in response to federal housing cutbacks, the withdrawal of for-profit developers from the subsidized housing business, and a deepening shortage of affordable housing in communities across the country.

Since 1981, federal housing funds have been slashed from over \$30 billion to under \$8 billion. New funding for public housing run by local government agencies has been virtually eliminated. When the Reagan administration ended subsidy programs for new apartment construction, most private developers stopped building low-income housing. Not surprisingly, the number of new low-income apartments has declined—from over 200,000 a year during the 1970s to less than 15,000 in 1988.

According to a just-completed survey by the Washington, D.C.-based National Congress for Community Economic Development, however, some 2,000 nonprofit builders—with ties to community organizations, churches, tenant groups, social service agencies, and unions—have tried to fill the vacuum. In lieu of federal monies, they have had to patch together resources from local and state governments, private foundations, businesses, and charities.

Raymond Flynn, the mayor of Boston, has called the emergence of socially-committed developers alongside church and community groups “the only silver lining in the dark cloud of the housing crisis during the Reagan years.” Over twenty-five nonprofit groups have built thousands of housing units in Boston during the last several years. At the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP), for example, the chairmen of the city’s largest banks and insurance companies sit on the board with city and state government officials and the directors of community-based nonprofit groups. Through the BHP, the city and state

government provide subsidies to builders. So far, ten Boston-based corporations have invested over \$16 million in projects undertaken by neighborhood-based community development corporations (CDC). These CDCs own and manage over 1,600 low-income apartments in the city.

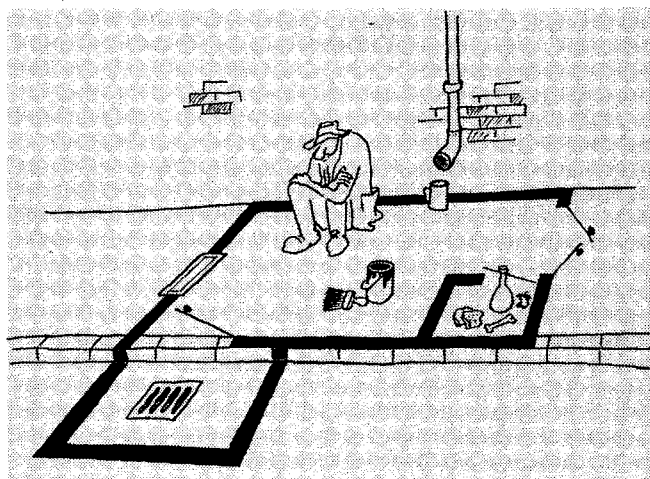
The bricklayers union in Boston pressured the bank that holds its pension fund to lend, at reduced rates, start-up monies needed to form a nonprofit housing group. In two years, the group has built more than two hundred brick, Victorian-style townhouses in three neighborhoods. Over a thousand working-class families applied for the homes, which were sold at the cost of construction, about half their market value.

Private foundations have also played a key role in supporting the nonprofit housing sector. A few years ago, Boston’s United Way began funding community development corporations, an experience so successful that the United Way of America began to fund similar projects in Houston, Chicago, Pontiac, Michigan, Rochester, and York, Pennsylvania.

In 1980, the Ford Foundation created the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to channel corporate funds to nonprofits. LISC-supported nonprofit groups in twenty-six cities have produced over 14,000 units for low- and moderate-income residents.

Developer James Rouse, who built the new town of Columbia, Maryland and whose urban festival marketplaces (e.g., Baltimore’s Inner Harbor and Boston’s Faneuil Hall) contributed to the nation’s inner city revival, has set up the Enterprise Foundation. Enterprise has provided financial and technical help (on construction techniques, for example) to over a hundred low-income groups in some twenty-seven communities, leading to more than 3,000 new homes.

Corporate America has increasingly recognized that nonprofits are an effective way to provide housing that is affordable for their low-wage employees. Business leaders in Cleveland, New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, and other cities have joined with government officials and community housing activists to form public-private-community partnerships. Some of San Francisco’s top business leaders sit on the board of the nonprofit Bridge Housing Corporation, which has built over 3,000 units in mixed-income developments in the Bay Area.



W

Building with a conscience

While nonprofit housing ventures have particular problems and limitations, they also have strengths that deserve to be recognized. "Nonprofit groups are responsive to community needs," says Sarah Smith, president of the Denver-based McAuley Housing Foundation, a group sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. "They're in a good position to involve local residents." Since 1980, the McAuley Foundation has helped community groups in rural areas and small towns (in Colorado, Idaho, and New Mexico) to build and repair 600 low-income housing units.

Richard D. Driscoll, head of the Bank of New England and Boston Housing Partnership chairman, has said that nonprofits "are a part of the neighborhood and a part of its daily life. They're aware of what matters after the rent is paid"—issues such as crime, job training, child care, and building maintenance.

Most nonprofits in housing have started by fixing up a small building or two. For example:

- In Dallas, the Common Ground Community Development Corporation has, since 1982, rehabilitated for low-

income families fifty inner-city homes that had been slated to be bulldozed.

- In the troubled manufacturing city of York, Pennsylvania, a long-term neighborhood social service agency set up the Crispus Attucks Community Development Corporation in 1983. With financial help from local businesses, foundations, and the city government, the group has fixed up twenty-six apartments, primarily for working poor families.

Some nonprofits have been able to expand their work significantly:

- The Catholic Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul has established twenty-four nonprofit groups that manage over 2,200 apartments for poor families, seniors, and handicapped persons. The groups link residents with medical services, child care, and other support programs as well.

- In the wealthy community of Santa Barbara, California, where the average home sold last year for over \$275,000, the nonprofit Community Housing Corporation has constructed 462 units—including single-family houses, garden-style apartments and condominiums, limited equity cooperatives, and a rooming house hotel—for the city's low-income families and elderly residents.

A few nonprofits are sophisticated builders with a social conscience, who have—often through foundations—constructed multimillion-dollar developments. P.D.

Even with these allies however, the bootstrap approach has its limits. Subsidy funds—required to fill the gap between what working-class families can afford and what housing costs to build and operate—are scarce. Meanwhile, waiting lists for any kind of affordable housing are bulging. Even the most penny-pinching nonprofit groups acknowledge that the federal government will have to resume a major role if their local success stories are to expand enough to help relieve the national housing crisis.

Many members of Congress, who went along with the housing cutbacks proposed by the administration during the eighties, were disenchanted with previous big-budget subsidy programs they viewed as expensive give-aways to politically-connected developers or to mismanaged local housing authorities.

While most public housing is well-managed, urban "high-rise ghettos" have hurt the overall image of public housing. As Professor Dennis Keating of Cleveland State University has said, "Subsidizing profit-oriented developers to house the poor...didn't work. They often take the money and run—with the tenants left behind in mismanaged projects and the taxpayers footing the bill. In contrast, nonprofit groups are more accountable to the residents and the surrounding community: they're not carpetbaggers. And they tend to spend public funds more wisely and cost-effectively—to make the housing work...."

Today, some housing experts see nonprofit groups as a helpful middle-ground between government-owned public

housing and government-subsidized for-profit developers. Congress may finally be willing to put the federal government back in the housing business, if nonprofits play a significant role. Last year, when Representative Joseph Kennedy (D-Mass.) filed the Community Housing Partnership Act—to provide federal funding to community-based housing groups—he quickly found over 100 cosponsors. If passed, the bill would provide three federal dollars for every dollar nonprofits can raise from local public and private sources.

"On its own, this \$500 million program is not an immediate solution to the national housing crisis," explained Kennedy. "But it provides a vehicle for steady growth in the nonprofit sector's capacity, so that within a few years it can have a major impact."

With the growing epidemic of homelessness among the poor and the decline of home ownership among the middle class, the Bush administration will be looking for new approaches to the nation's housing woes. Perhaps newly confirmed HUD Secretary Jack Kemp, a conservative former Congressman from Buffalo, will expand the nonprofit approach as part of his overall housing program. To an administration that emphasizes self-help, entrepreneurship, and grassroots initiative, the nonprofit approach could have a decidedly Republican appeal.

PETER DREIER

Peter Dreier has written widely on housing policy issues. His articles have appeared in the New York Times, the New Republic, the Boston Globe, and other publications.

CONGRESS HAS A BIRTHDAY

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE FOR REFORM

The letter to the Philadelphia *Advertiser* in 1791 was a tongue-in-cheek description of a "curious conversation" among several women. Oddly enough, their talk was a sympathetic, if condescending, discussion of the United States Congress. Sophia, the first speaker, called it "our poor Congress." She felt that the contending pressures from interest groups would send some of the members of the Congress in question home quite out of their minds. If they attempt a tax on liquor, she said, "they are all hissed," and if they vote for defense, "they are all called pickpockets and cutthroats." The conversation continued in that vein and ended with the suggestion that the time had come for women to take over the government since the men could not seem to cope with it successfully.

That letter was clearly a satirical summing up of some of the difficulties the first Congress encountered in making the government described in the Constitution work. This year, on March 4, the present Congress celebrated the 200th birthday of that Congress. On the evidence of the 1791 letter, it is clear that the problems faced by each Congress have been, if nothing else, pretty consistent over the last two centuries.

In a recent speech, Congresswoman Corinne C. (Lindy) Boggs (D-La.), a member of the Commission on the Bicentenary, pointed out that the first Congress dealt with subjects not unlike those that face the 101st Congress. She listed legislation concerning copyrights and patents, tariffs, support of lighthouses and maritime regulations, an act to preserve the records of government, a naturalization act, postal regulations, duties on distilled spirits, and of course the funding of the national debt. "Overall, the first Congress

was preoccupied with the national debt created by the Revolutionary War." Deficits are not new.

The job of that first Congress, said Congresswoman Boggs, was "to take the great document drafted at Philadelphia in 1787 and make it work...."

It is not generally known that when the Constitution was adopted, much work was left to be done. The executive and judicial branches of the government were only partially described and had to be fleshed out with legislation. During the ratification process many states had demanded constitutional amendments guaranteeing certain liberties. "It is safe to say that the first Congress breathed life into the Constitution and transformed it from a document describing how government should work, to an actual functioning system."

Congress created the executive departments of state, treasury, and war and established the office of attorney general. It passed a judiciary act establishing the Supreme Court and the federal court system. It drafted the Bill of Rights. It also debated the location of the nation's capital.

"Not everything the first Congress did was of such Olympian proportions," noted Boggs. "The Senate, which then met in secret, spent practically its entire first month in debate over what to call the president. Should it be "His Excellency" or "His Elective Highness" or, as the Senate came to prefer: "His Highness, the President of the United States and Protector of the Rights of the Same"? The House of Representatives rejected these inflated titles and, thanks to its members, we have always called the president simply, "Mr. President."

The congresswoman pointed out, however, that even this debate, which seems ridiculous now, had its serious side.

There was fear that such exalted titles would foster the establishment of a monarchy in the U.S. and threaten the country's development as a republic. In this debate can be seen the seed of the ultimate division of the electorate into two parties with somewhat different visions of democratic government.

The celebration of the bicentennial birthday of the Congress did not come at a particularly happy time. The ceremony, held in the House chamber, was high-spirited and impressive, it is true. There was a scholarly and entertaining address by distinguished historian David McCullough and a reading by the present poet laureate, Howard Nemerov. But the celebration came almost midway between the harassing attack on the pay raise bill stimulated by the media and furthered by an enraged citizenry, and the ill-perceived debate on the confirmation of John Tower for secretary of defense.

Congress had also been under attack for such improprieties as accepting gifts and honoraria from sources interested in specific legislation. In addition, it had been accused of self-perpetuation by means of faulty election laws, campaign funding practices, and skewed use of the incumbent's perquisites. Indeed, one of its distinguished former members had, in a recent book, called for doing away with the bicameral Congress as we know it, and substituting a parliamentary system akin to that of the British.

Congress needs reform. But it is the same body which, in its first term gave us the energetic and unifying government denied us by the Articles of Confederation. It is the same body which took the lead in establishing policy for westward expansion with initiatives like the Homestead Act in the early-nineteenth century, and, in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, furthered economic democracy by its policy of regulating financial institutions and business for the good of all. And it has done so much more.

As Howard Nemerov expressed it in his commemorative poem, Congress is the distillation of the two-hundred million and more of us. Its faults are our faults. We should enter into its reform even as we learn more of its history (and ours) in the bicentennial year. □

BACKING INTO MODERNITY

CONFESSIONS OF A CULTURAL CONSERVATIVE

When pressed to describe myself as either a liberal or a conservative, I respond (stealing and then amending a remark first made by Daniel Bell) that I am a political liberal and a cultural conservative. This is not, I grant, a very illuminating self-description, but at least it is less unilluminating than calling myself either a simple liberal or a simple conservative.

One of the problems with describing oneself as a cultural conservative is the company one has to keep. The Ayatollah Khomeini, for instance, would have to be classified as a cultural conservative. Well, I'm not *that* kind of cultural conservative.

Nor am I the Pat Buchanan kind either. Buchanan has a number of debating points to make about Salman Rushdie's alleged insults to Muslim religious sensitivities. Now, it is perfectly okay for Buchanan to make these points, just as it would be perfectly okay for him to make the same points regarding virtually every significant twentieth-century novelist, since they have nearly all given offense to one shade or other of religion. (Oddly enough, except for some Protestant fundamentalists who are currently taking offense at the likes of Judy Blume, Christians have largely given up being offended by books. I'm not sure whether this tolerance is good or bad.) But it shows a certain want of good taste, to say the least, for Buchanan to raise these complaints at precisely the moment when the Imam has ordered Rushdie's assassination. If Pat really felt the urge to take a whack at poor Salman, couldn't he have done it last year? Or perhaps next year? But good taste has never been Buchanan's strong point.

One of the characteristics of the cultural conservative is an orientation toward the past, a prejudice in favor of tradition. Judging by this standard, how-

ever, almost everyone in the world was a cultural conservative until two centuries ago; for it wasn't until well into the eighteenth century that the thought occurred to anyone that the opposite attitude could be adopted—an orientation toward the future, a prejudice in favor of innovation. The two great cultural movements that wrote *finis* to the medieval world and opened the way to modernity—the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation—were both backward-looking events. The men of the Renaissance rejected medievalism, not in the name of the future, but in the name of a past more remote than the Middle Ages. Their battle cry was, “Back to the Romans! Back to the Greeks!” And the men of the Reformation certainly had no wish to innovate, no desire to modernize religion or anything else. So far indeed from wishing to modernize Christianity, they wanted to primitivize it; they wanted to escape the medieval church by returning to the early church. If the Renaissance and the Reformation led us into the modern world, which they certainly did, they did so by backing into it, not by marching toward it.

This past-orientation can of course be overdone, and then the dead hand of dead ages weighs heavily on the present. But by the late-twentieth century we have so far overcome our orientation to the past that we have largely lost our sense of tradition. The study of history, which in the nineteenth century was accessible to the average educated person, is now largely the preserve of specialists. For most of the rest of us history is, in the inspired word of Henry Ford, “bunk.” Or if it is not quite bunk, it is at all events not very important—a sign of which is that history teach-

ers find it virtually impossible to teach history to our children. Let the dead bury the dead. Our orientation is toward the future. We believe in tomorrow, not yesterday.

But there are two possible attitudes toward the future. One can view the future as a land of opportunity, or one can view it as a region of responsibility. In principle, of course, these attitudes are not incompatible, since only if the future is approached in a spirit of responsibility will it remain an ample reservoir of opportunities. But in practice, the two attitudes are often in conflict: take the battle between those who would protect the earth's environment and those who would exploit it without limit; or the battle between those who would pile up an enormous national debt for our children and grandchildren to pay, and those who would try to keep the debt to a reasonable size.

Ironically, the best way to develop an attitude of responsibility toward the future is to cultivate a sense of gratitude toward the past. I am not going so far as to advocate Oriental-style ancestor worship, but the Chinese and Japanese have had a point. We are born into a world that we didn't make, and it is only fair that we should be grateful to those who did make it. Such gratitude carries with it the imperative that we preserve and at least slightly improve the world that has been given us before passing it on to subsequent generations. We stand in the midst of many generations. If we are indifferent to those who went before us and actually existed, how can we expect to be concerned for the well-being of those who come after us and only potentially exist?

Catholics, I should add, are cultural conservatives almost by definition. This means we have to keep some pretty unsavory company: Torquemada, for example, was a Catholic cultural conservative. On the brighter side, it means we are custodians of an ancient tradition, not only in religion but in all the vast number of secular values and philosophies that have fed into Catholicism in the past two millennia. Tradition can indeed be a dead hand. But it can also be a springboard to the future. After a few hundred years of modernity, we ought to know how to utilize it as a springboard. □

COMING

Robert E. Hosmer, Jr.
on Muriel Spark

SLEEPING LIKE SPOONS

A QUESTION OF EMBODIMENT

JOHN GILES MILHAVEN

The Philosopher's Question

The other evening, I held forth to my friend Fergal, poet, farmer, and family man, on recent erotic poetry by women, such as Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Adrienne Rich, Susan Griffin, Judy Grahn, Maya Angelou, Erica Jong, and Marge Piercy. Over beer and chips, I expounded my view that writing like this helps a Christian philosopher like me....The poems illustrate what is true of much more than sexual love....Human love of all sorts is bodily....In all sorts of love, the bodily is precious for its own sake....Christian thinkers from the beginning and still today neglect this truth.

They may not seem to neglect it. For decades now, "body" has been "in." What Christian today would not declare that the human body is good? But, said I to Fergal, it is applied chiefly to the esoteric and aesthetic. When I hear praise of the bodily, the speaker or writer usually goes on to give as illustration forms of meditation or diet or exercise or spending time in nature or art appreciation or art creation. What of the ordinary bodiliness of most human lives above the poverty line? I hear little of this. Are there not values here a Christian might tend to neglect and should appreciate more?

True, all Christians discoursing today on sex affirm the goodness of the bodily in making love. But it is, for the most part, an unexamined slogan. None whom I have read identifies what is so good about this bodiliness itself, what makes it peculiarly valuable for its own sake. Even those who denounce a "dualistic" view of sex go on usually to see the sexual value of the bodily, not in itself, but in expressing something else, some deeper or higher value. For them, the bodily is good not for itself but because it expresses the personal.

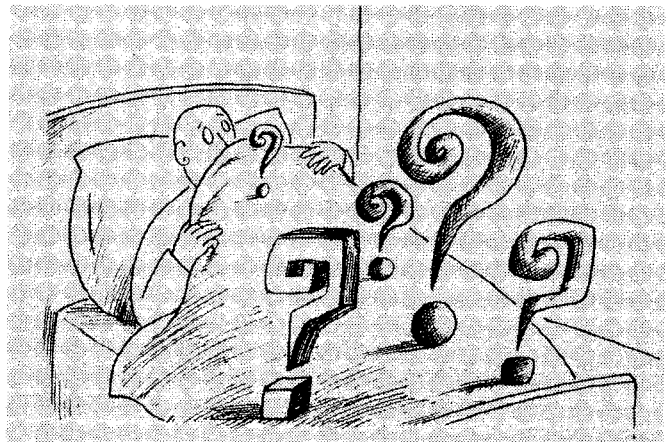
Why then do lovers—spouses, for instance—happily and wisely will bodily excitement and satisfaction for its own sake, and not just for what it may express and serve? What is there in

this turbulent, fleshy need and in this opaque, overwhelming pleasure that God sees is good? Could it be that this bodily tumult not only expresses the personal but is itself precious because it is peculiarly personal?

I cannot find ethicists who inquire in a coherent, sustained way: What is the bodily in making love? What are the bodily feelings here? Writers call "bodily" the sexual values they affirm, but could not an angel experience what they go on to describe? Pioneering Christian ethicists, such as James Nelson, Karen Lebacqz, and Andre Guindon, have begun a phenomenology of the bodily in sex, but they have only begun.

My point—I gestured vigorously to the patient Fergal—is not sex. But by neglecting the bodily in sex and elsewhere, ethicists bypass a great good. They detour around commonplace, vulgar, precious human eros. Praising it vaguely, they look away from its peculiar nature and value. From Griffin, Rich, Lorde, Dorothy Dinnerstein, and Haunani-Kay Trask, I have started to learn how consistently our civilization pushes our eros out of our sight. Our loss is disastrous.

As these writers illustrate in poetry and explicate in prose, the eros that makes good sex is the same eros that makes all good love in human life. Good sexual lovemaking simply exemplifies it vividly. Sex is only one helpful paradigm for eros. These writers are right, I cried, and with the great mystical theologian of Christian East and West, Dionysius the Areopagite, I "dare to



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affirm" that God is eros. All movements of creatures to unite with each other and, harmoniously, each in its own way, to rise toward God are nothing but their sharing of divine eros. The sacrificial, giving love, the Christian agape, is just another side of eros.

Our eros, therefore, is usually not sexual. But good sex suggests how the rest of our eros is also thoroughly bodily, and its bodiliness is thoroughly personal. In all eros, I submit, the bodily does not merely express the personal. It is personal: intrapersonal and interpersonal.

And I went on to Fergal: this raises the question that I am struggling with: But how? *How* in our experiences of good bodily eros, sexual and otherwise, is the physical personal? I want a general phenomenology of eros, more explicit and systematic than my female teachers offer. The congenial writings of Matthew Fox, Tom Driver, Sam Keen, and Charles Davis fall far short, it seems to me. I am ready to attempt the phenomenology myself, but first, I must listen further to individual, concrete experiences of eros. I need to reread the sexually erotic poems of women. But much more, I need accounts of individual erotic experience that is not sexual. The recent lecture by my teaching assistant, Diana Cates, on the erotic nature of her two home births, instructed me greatly.

I'm looking for something like Suzanne Miller's essay here, said I to Fergal, but not sexual. I held out to Fergal my copy of *Pleasures: Women Write Erotica* (ed. Lonnie Barbach, Harper and Row, 1984), with a marker at Miller's "Awakening." If you think of anything, let me know. Fergal nodded, took the book, changed the subject, and a week later passed me the following:

Fergal's Reply

In the essay you gave me, Miller reports that a "familiar yet ever unexpected gesture" of her husband, sleeping in bed with her, continues to move her. "Elliot's hand comes to immediate and reassuring rest upon the small of my back, as it unfailingly does when he lies next to me as I stir into awakening." Suzanne Miller, before going on to describe her experience of this gesture and its aftermath, remarks that she and Elliot "don't sleep like spoons."

That made me stop. Julie, my wife, and I sleep like spoons. Not every night, nor the whole night when we do. Not in the hot weather. But in the cool and cold weather most of the time. We do it automatically, taking it for granted, hardly deciding. Our minds are on sleep and this is the way we sleep.

A spy, peering at us, would be amused at our danse militaire. When during the night one wakes and turns, so does the other, both hitching then to maximal touching. If we were both facing the wall, we both now face the window, still snugly fitting into each other. Sometimes one leads. Sometimes the other. It must look comic since I'm a scarecrow and Julie is short and plump.

I try, in what follows, to describe just what I feel in spoon-sleeping, though I have always presumed Julie feels the same.

She has read what follows and says it's pretty much her experience, "if I understand what you're saying." But when I say what "we both feel," it's only what *I* feel we feel. You can talk to Julie if you want.

My experience of spoon-sleeping lasts a matter of seconds. I go to sleep immediately when we close together. I curl around Julie (or vice versa), feel her warm, silk heaviness with mine, and yield to sleep, scarcely knowing I do. I am amazed, when I start to describe this brief bit of routine, how many things I feel.

Some of what I feel, I would call "erotic." Betty Miller, in *On the Side of the Angels*, identifies the moment when Claudia, after long resistance to the advances of a man she hardly knows and neither likes nor respects, is overcome by feeling for him. They are sitting by a stream. He embraces her. She stiffens in resistance. He considers her, bends over her, kisses her. "The resistance went out of her, momentarily he had her full weight on his arm." That is something like I feel when I curl up with Julie. The resistance goes out of me. The bed has my full weight on it. The nothingness of sleep has my full weight on it. All of me falls. Nothing holds back.

Why do I call it erotic? It is not sexual, at least not in a genital sense. It seems to be love of sleep rather than love of Julie. Or love of self? It is a blissful giving way by bodily self to itself. A sweetness of complete relaxing, of luxurious letting go of muscles, skins, nerves, and all. An effortless, sensuous shedding of all concerns, worries, even thoughts. I am the kind of man who can't eat, drink, make love, play, or anything without simultaneously thinking about it. But as I slope down with Julie to sleep, thoughts float off. I don't think. I enjoy. I enjoy myself.

It's hard to describe since it lasts only seconds and I scarcely notice it happening. The bliss is not just in the losing of tension, concerns, thoughts, etc. Voluptuous fullness takes over me. I am filled by the pleasure of swelling desire and the pleasure of desire collapsing into satisfaction. Gluttonous, needy, triumphant desire of the enveloping darkness.

It makes no sense when I think about it. How does unconsciousness appear so desirable to me that I dive into it with abandon? I know of course that my biological nature forces sleep on me so my body can rest and replenish its forces. But I am not conscious of this as Julie and I curl together. I just blissfully need and want to fall blissfully asleep. And do. There is no sense to it. Nor should there be, that I can think of.

I relish even more the deliciousness of it when we wake during the night. "What time is it?" I whisper, who see little without glasses. Some hours left. We turn, staying joined. Sometimes I fall back asleep instantly. Other times I hold a moment. Weighed down with sleep, I anticipate the joy of giving in totally. I savor the moment, and then plunge with lusty, incredulous will. It is unbelievable that it is all right for me to yield totally to this languor. Sometimes—you may find this hard to believe—I murmur, "God is good!"

Falling asleep is not the most intense pleasure I experience in my life, but it is relatively rare inasmuch as it is complete pleasure. I mean: pure pleasure. I have pleasure and nothing else. Nothing else on my mind. No subsequent letdown or restlessness. A perfection of pleasure.



ccasionally I am alone when I fall asleep this way. It happened last Friday in the upper field as I rested after lunch. I stretched out and in a moment was riding down from the sun shining through my eyelids, down into the black abyss.

I could have read my Hopkins, which I had in my sack. I could have walked in the woods as I often do. They're gorgeous this time of year. I chose sleep and my sinking was voluptuous.

You talk about "values." Those are big values in my life: poetry reading, woods walking, and falling asleep. They are important to me. Which of the three is more important? Better? Of higher value? Greater? I don't know. I can't rank them. I can't even compare them. They're very different. They each make my life more worthwhile. I live in a garden and I'm showing you three of the flowers.

As usual, you will ask, "Why?" Why is this banal, run-of-the-mill falling to sleep so precious to you? I answer, as usual, "I don't know." Well, perhaps I know a bit of what I feel. As I slide into oblivion, I seem to rejoin a hidden part of myself. I enter into a strain of my life that is inaccessible to me most of the time. I come upon and hug an old friend. I greet me as I meet me, for that fleeting instant. As I fade out, I feel larger in life. I feel more whole, more one.

Falling asleep with myself, I call an erotic experience! How much more erotic is falling asleep with Julie! This is a plain fact of experience. But, as I try to anticipate your philosophical questions, it becomes mysterious. For my going to sleep glued to Julie is obviously centered on myself.

Through my head flow unchecked thoughts, arising from my day just past. I have no idea what thoughts go through Julie's head. I think mainly of my going to sleep, and only peripherally, if at all, of Julie's. As thoughts vanish and I slip gladly into the quicksand, Julie is out of my mind.

And yet. And yet. Friday's nap by the field was exceptional. Rarely do I fall to sleep so easily and voluptuously without Julie. Not always as spoons. We, too, know that touch of the hand Suzanne and Elliot know. But if Julie's not there, it takes me close to an hour to fall asleep, as it did before I married and in the first years of marriage.

Only lying in touch with Julie can I count on getting swiftly that kinesthetic sense of security in sliding down. The heavy, sweet sleep I seep into is my sleep, not hers, but it is rarely so quickly overpowering as on feeling Julie and forgetting her. What takes over me that I drift so surely, so languorously, so complacently into that invisible vortex? What brings about this quick fading of all fears? This crass confidence in free fall?

I don't understand how it comes about. Julie and I are fearful persons. She is not—not when we go to sleep anyway—a protective parent for me. Nor I for her. But when we curl together at the end of the long day, the air becomes too thick for fears to penetrate. Our feeling each other is not only sensual pleasure, but sensual trust. Wrapped together in our bodily trust we slide into the abyss. Nothing bad can happen right now, we fondly feel.

Whence our complacency? Obvious: from our knowing we're together, going to sleep. Nothing dramatic. Routine we

don't pay attention to. We're tired together. We go together to sleep. I don't think it's true to say: we sleep together. We each sleep our private sleep. But it is true: We go together to sleep. And often during the night we come together out of sleep and go back in together.

Spoon-sleeping is not an I-Thou relation. I do not "encounter" Julie—that favorite verb of yours. Julie and I go together to encounter sleep. During the night, we may wake and bob up, luxuriously relishing each other, and then bob down again with common will and desire. It is a we-relation. Is it irrelevant that in body we do not face each other, but ride on each other's back?

I don't think of Julie as I go off to sleep. She's not in my mind. But she's in my legs, torso, and arms. Not in my head. Without thinking of it, I know her there going to sleep like me. I know her knowing me the same way. This must be why that trust rises swiftly and fills us. We're together though our minds are elsewhere. We know each other letting go, giving in to sleep. We...we...we...I don't know. That is all I can think of for now. I'm getting to the heart of it but I'm tired out. Writing for philosophers is exhausting.

You said you want in your writing and teaching to make clear the valuable things of human lives. Well, sleeping like spoons with Julie is one of mine. When I drive out on a morning in my tractor, I feel rich. Part of that feeling is the dimming memory of last night's sleep.

The memory is only one of many riches, "values" if you will. I am a rich man. If by some permanent ailment of one of us, Julie and I had to sleep in separate beds for the rest of our lives, I'd sure miss it. But I'd still be rich. Just to point to some of the larger coffers: I have countless other ways of being with her, countless ways of being with our kids, countless ways of being with our land, friends, a nice pregnant daughter-in-law, health, house, weather, some material security. I could go on.

It remains true that sleeping like spoons with Julie is a jewel I have and softly hold. This banal, undramatic, scarcely attended to, monotonously recurring moment of my life is one I feel happiest about and proudest of when I think of it. No. I feel happy and proud of it all the time, whether I think of it or not. Why? I leave it to you philosophers to answer. Sip and savor my vin ordinaire with your conceptual spoons. □

Robert L. Wheeler

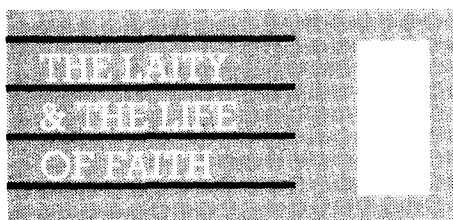
Lichen

Sweet, indefatigable, assumptionless,
green incarnation of suspended mist
"crustose, fruticose, foliose"
plainly the posy of the Holy Ghost.

I WONDERED IF I WOULD PASS THE TEST

SANDRA H. JOHNSON

THE RAGING WATERS WITHIN



am sitting in a chapel in the airport in Cleveland as I write this. I can still hear the incessant pages over the loud-

speaker and the travelers' conversations as they pass the door of the chapel. I've never been in an airport chapel before, but I thought it might be a more appropriate place for inspiration than the cafeteria across the way. Ordinarily, I wouldn't mention the locale, but it does capture a good portion of my life. As a law professor with a special interest in modern health care, I travel a lot. It's often so much hurry up and wait. By the time I finish my work, whether in the law school at St. Louis University or at a conference in some distant city, I want to be home immediately—if not an hour ago. The longing to get home is as intense as the excitement of leaving to do "great and important" work. This time I delivered a conference paper on the legalities of high-technology home-health care, which is growing so rapidly and has significant impact on the well-being of both the person cared for and the caregiver.

I'm not very good at slow and steady. I always run hot or cold; I'm always speeding along or lazing. It's the same with my prayer.

My husband and I belong to a prayer group with four other couples. We meet monthly and have for the past six years or so. I also have been taking a three-day Passion Week retreat for each of the past five years and a shorter retreat in Advent. I often guide my actions with a prayer. For example, I am a lector at our parish, and each time before I read I pray to the Holy Spirit that God will speak using my voice and that the congregation will hear the Word. Often before I begin to teach I pray a prayer for teachers by Thomas Aquinas:

Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom,
lofty origin of all being....

Give me a sharp sense of understanding, a retentive
memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and
fundamentally.

Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations,

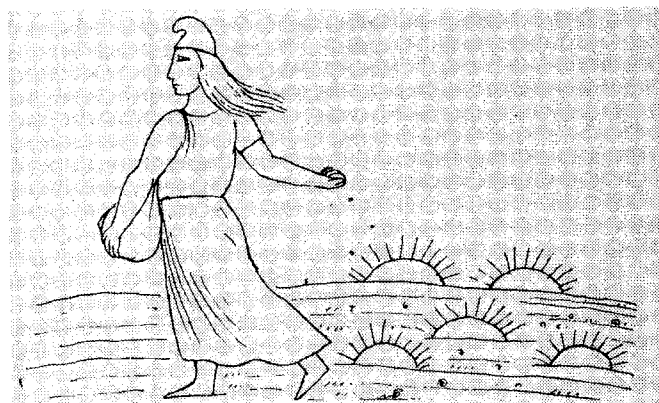
and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm.

Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and help in the completion....

These things do change my life in important ways. When I place my teaching in a prayerful context, for example, it is fundamentally changed. I'm not sure that the students notice the difference, though I believe that they probably do. But I notice the difference; my work is more meaningful. It is easier for me to treat the one hundred students in my class as individual and precious human beings, who are confronting moral challenges as individuals and professionals as well as trying to master a particular technical subject matter. This may sound like a pretty lively prayer life—and sometimes it is. Other times, though, I find myself just going through the motions. I try not to live in two worlds: a world of work and a world of home; a world of prayer and faith and a "real" or "modern" world. I try to make one world.

As much as possible, for example, I try to involve our children in my volunteer work, something we learned from *Parenting for Peace and Justice*, by Jim and Kathy McGinnis. Our daughters, Emily, thirteen, and Katie, ten, are experts in "stuffing envelopes and sticking labels for peace and justice." It helps the cause and they are getting a sense of the value of doing what they can do.

Dolores Curran recently wrote an article in which she commented on "church orphans," those children whose parents are



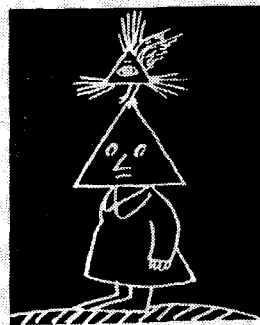
very active volunteers in their parish. Curran's point is a good one: parish organizations should be sensitive about asking parents of young children to volunteer. The way I have resolved the constant, and important, requests for help is to select those in which my daughters can participate. They didn't like it when I served on the parish council, for example, but they seem to like helping to deliver Christmas baskets and serving at parish events. They have even been lectors with us at special Masses. They make phone calls to let the families on my assigned phone tree know when school is canceled due to snow; they love that job. I try to have meetings in my home so the children can meet the people with whom I work. They also like to plan a decoration for the table or prepare a snack for our guests. If the meeting doesn't continue too long, they even tolerate the imposition. And if we are asked to host a visiting family, Emily and Katie make the decision because it is their bedrooms that will be used.

Children are much more capable than we give them credit for, and their participation is very meaningful to them. Although it is often more complex to involve the children, I like having them with me.

The Gospels and Epistles give us a model for how human communities should come together and treat each other. It is not the model most often adopted by university faculties, especially law faculties in which each person is skilled in advocacy and negotiation and enjoys the process. In my experience, however, parishes or peace groups or others who should know better often neglect or abuse the individuals working in their organizations. I try, not often successfully, to challenge destructive politics; it is so easy to gossip and to use whispered conspiracies as a method of succeeding in a dispute. The problem is that you may succeed by harming another's reputation or credibility, and that tends to injure the whole group over the long term. When I am on opposite sides from someone, I generally try to talk to that person directly as soon as possible. I try, on an individual basis, to listen, to discern solutions, and to keep a sense of community, with all that implies for respecting each person and taking time to work out acceptable resolutions. I feel better about myself and my colleagues when I've been able to behave in a manner consistent with my values.

What caused me to come to value the "human" side as much as the "task" side of meetings is the transformation of our own parish council. When I first joined it, the meetings were cold and boring. We merely gathered to nod our heads at appropriate times. I didn't even know the names of the other members! Then the new chairperson of the council decided that we could be a "faith community" and began in simple ways to make it so. For each meeting, a member prepared a prayer or reading, and there was time at the beginning for sharing. This invigorated the council and contributed to our development as individuals.

My experience is that prayer makes a real difference in my "one world" campaign. Yet there are months when I don't pray; my prayer life is dry and my relationship with God is distant. In those times, I will pray only at Sunday Mass, if then, or make



In 1987, *Commonweal* published a series of articles by lay people who described their personal experiences of faith in the work place. We received such positive response to the series that we have decided to continue it. We asked each individual:

How is your Catholic faith manifest in your daily life and work? How has faith shaped your choices: vocational, financial, ethical; and vice versa? Where do you find spiritual strength and guidance?

The first contributor to this series is Sandra H. Johnson, a professor of law at St. Louis University, director of the university's Center for Health Law Studies, and assistant professor of law in internal medicine at the university's medical school. She is co-author of *Nursing Homes and the Law* (Harrison, 1984) and *Health Law* (West Publishing, 1987).

a quick Sign of the Cross, more out of superstition than prayer. Sometimes the long silences happen because I lose a sense of myself and feel too agitated for the intimacy that is prayer. These times occur when I get very wrapped up in some writing project or program or have to meet a deadline on a substantial task. And sometimes I know that I simply refuse, although I would like to deny that.

People ask me how I can do so much teaching and writing and speaking and homemaking. I never really answer because part of the answer is that I do it by driving myself crazy. I push deadlines. I don't expect perfection in either my writing or my housecleaning. I allow only so much time to do something—then it can't take more. (I read that Red Smith was asked how long it took him to write an article and he said, "As long as I've got.")

Prayer is not like writing an article, teaching a class, cooking dinner, or playing with the kids. It doesn't seem to have a deadline. It's so easy to say, "I will, but later." It is easy for me to watch television and read at the same time; help the kids with homework and cook dinner. But you can't do that with prayer that reaches a deeper level.

Eventually, though, I can no longer avoid recognizing the emptiness within. Gently, quietly, slowly, I hear the voice of God as if in the wind. Of course, it's not the wind. It's usually in the voices of other people who relate their own experience, or question, or offer an opportunity.

I have found that I must put myself in the presence of God or my faith community no matter what, no matter how stressed I am or how tired or how rebellious. I have to drag myself to Sunday Mass and listen to the readings even when they seem meaningless. I have to be where people are singing of faith. I know from experience that I will at some point hear a word,

phrase, or story that touches me and allows me to let go of my agitation and fears and trust in God's faithfulness.

I remember, for example, when I had closed myself up in order to avoid confronting some painful memories, the Mass at which I heard, as if for the first time, the song by the St. Louis Jesuits, "Be Not Afraid." I always had believed that the raging waters and fires of hell and power of death mentioned in the song were things that only martyrs and saints had to deal with. But that day at Mass, the hymn revealed to me that the raging waters and fires of hell were in my own heart, in the painful memories and hurts that I would have to admit and then forgive.

Such callings have happened so frequently that it puts me in wonder of the faithfulness of God. My own questions have changed, though some recur over time: Am I, with legal education as my full-time job in a Catholic university, doing as God would want me to do? Do I have a different calling or is this the one? Is my position so financially and intellectually rewarding that I simply fear any fundamental change?

My husband Bob has multiple sclerosis (MS). We've known for over five years, yet only recently have I been willing to listen to what that means in relation to God's plan for me, as well as for him and for our family as a whole. One Sunday one of the readings exhorted Christians not to live in ignorance but to discern in wisdom God's plan present in our lives. The following week one of the men in our prayer group commented on how meaningful that had been for him, as it was for me as well. I had been waiting for the "other shoe to drop" in relation to Bob's condition. So far, Bob has suffered very little physical incapacity due to the MS. One clear benefit of his being diagnosed is that we do not put off until tomorrow things that we want to do. Family vacations immediately became a very high priority with us. We even have money deducted from his paycheck and automatically deposited in a travel account.

I have had the feeling that the difficult part was yet to come, much as I have often felt that the test of faith spoken of in Scripture would happen for me sometime in the future. I wondered—sometimes anxiously—if I would pass the test, whether the test were Bob's incapacitation or some test of faith. That reading and the opportunity to reflect on it in our prayer group released in me the grief I felt for the loss that I—not Bob and not my children—had already experienced because of his diagnosis. I had lost a sense of security that I had had in our first ten years of marriage. Bob had been, and in fact still is, sort of a jock. That is part of the man I married. He was, and still is, dependable and reliable and strong, though maybe a little less so now than before. Somehow I had expected to be the one who would need to be cared for, as sexist and unrealistic as that sounds. This loss of a sense of security and change in expectations is something I feel real grief over, just as Bob's self-image has changed by virtue of his having MS, even if the physical limitations have been minimal. It was only in prayer that I was able to understand this.

My experiences give me the discipline to put myself in the presence of prayer—whether at Mass, in my prayer group, or on retreat. Mass attendance, prayer group, and retreats are partly my habit, but they are also a choice. I know it is much better to

have a regular prayer time and a special prayer place, but that's not the way I am, at least not now.

So I find myself trusting in the church—the same church that so often causes me frustration and anger. It is the same church in which my daughters have to experience the humiliation of being told that simply because they are female they are prohibited from serving at the altar. This hurts them. My older daughter told me at age eleven that if women couldn't be altar servers or priests, men ought not be allowed to be lectors then! I told her that injustice is not cured by creating a new injustice; I'm not sure that she believed me.

I am angry when I have to listen to priests who abuse the pulpit by standing there with only a vague idea of what they want to say and meandering through the mandatory twenty minutes. I regret that the church does not encourage diversity in preaching, including women preachers and lay preachers of different races. What different perspectives and experiences these people could bring to the interpretation and reflection on Scripture.

But, despite all this, I find myself returning over and over to the Mass, because to me the Eucharist remains uncompromised by the weaknesses of the organizational church. I believe that our institutional church maintains a vision of respect for human dignity in protest against modern culture, a vision that I embrace. I believe that the church can change.

Because I know from experience the critical role that particular individuals have played in my own faith journey, I know that I have a role to play in contributing to the development of the people of God. I have seen God because a parish council president decided that the council was to become a faith community and center on prayer as well as agenda; because my husband's faithfulness and steadfastness reflect that of Christ; because my children ask me "why" a lot; and because the men and women in my prayer group reveal their own personal struggles and rewards.

I must rely on what I have found to be true: that if I put myself in the presence of a faithful community, God will be there. □

STAGE

A LAND WITHOUT DREAMS

'HANK WILLIAMS' & 'STANDARD'

For works so unlike on the surface, Larry L. King's *The Night Hank Williams Died* and Richard Greenberg's *Eastern Standard* have a great deal in common. Both King's play, rich in country music and country metaphor, and Greenberg's brittle New York comedy are in the long line of plays and novels in which American society defeats or disappoints the protagonist.

The Night Hank Williams Died does it old-style. King's hero, Thurmond Stottle, is a combination of two of American drama's

favorite losers. He is a star high-school athlete (see Biff in *Death of a Salesman*) who has never adjusted to the day the cheering stopped. He is the young man more ambitious than his stultifying surroundings (see Chance Wayne in *Sweet Bird of Youth*) who finally falls victim to the prejudices and jealousies of his old associates. Thurmond sees himself as a country music star, in the image of his idol Hank Williams, but, unlike Chance, he never leaves his small Texas town to test his talents in the big world. Instead, he sticks around Gus's bar, talking about his glorious past and his triumphant future, singing the songs that are supposed to make him famous (King's songs, actually) and remembering his high-school sweetheart, Nellie Bess Power. It is the return of Nellie Bess which initiates the action of the play. Trapped in a loveless marriage, she pushes Thurmond to go with her to Nashville to peddle his songs, and when Gus refuses to lend them money for the trip, Thurmond bungles a burglary, kills a man, and is finally gunned down by a nasty cliché of a sheriff.

In a final scene after Thurmond's funeral—a coda of sorts—Nellie Bess describes him as a dreamer in a land without dreams. Her line places the play in the generic context I described above, but it is a little difficult to elevate Thurmond into a symbolic sacrifice to small-town narrowness. The town has little real presence. Thurmond has no family and no friends, except for Gus, a surrogate father (Nellie Bess's real father, the subplot whispers), whose function is to expound—repeatedly—the play's thematic point. We are told that the whole town is gossiping about Thurmond and Nellie Bess, but we see only eccentric examples of the townsfolk—the bullying sheriff; Nellie Bess's mother, who sees visions of Jesus; and a comic drunk who gets all the best lines. On the other hand, Thurmond seems not so much a dreamer as a garrulous cadger of drinks, a petty thief, a self-pitying young man who cannot accept that he has ended as a filling-station attendant. When he falls back on what Tennessee Williams, speaking of his own work, called "cornpone melodrama," King artificially inflates the significance of his protagonist. The play would be more painful—and probably more accurate—if Thurmond were left in Gus's bar at the end, trying to promote a bottle of beer for himself, while Nellie Bess went back to her boring chiropractor. By concentrating on the deficiencies of King's play—too much plot, too much message—I am unfair to *The Night Hank Williams Died*. King has a good ear for Texas dialect and a skillful way of using it for the best comic effects. The play is pleasant enough, if only the audience were not expected to take it so seriously.

The same thing might be said of *Eastern Standard*. Although characters as venerable as Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus have discovered that getting what you want is not worth the price you pay, Greenberg's play about contemporary soul-sellers is in the new vein of Yuppie distress. Stephen is a successful architect who has come to believe that his work is harmful to the urban environment it is transforming, and Phoebe is a Wall Street type who has been closely allied, sexually and professionally, with a man charged with insider trading. Although she likes her work as Stephen does not, both of them have empty personal lives, presumably one result of a mis-



**WHAT'S
GOING
ON**

**"TO KNOW WHAT
IS GOING ON
IN THE CATHOLIC
INTELLECTUAL
WORLD, THERE IS
NO BETTER PLACE
THAN COMMONWEAL."**

—REMBERT WEAKLAND, O.S.B.
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placed sense of values. The AIDS subplot, in which Phoebe's brother, Peter, newly diagnosed with the disease, fends off the advances of Stephen's friend, Drew, is a bit difficult to work into the central theme unless one wants to take the far-right position that AIDS is a punishment for a badly chosen way of life—not simply homosexuality, in this case, but the sins of being a television writer and a fashionable painter. Greenberg's device is to introduce into this foursome a pushily charming would-be actress and a foul-mouthed bag woman, whose presence in Stephen's summer house alleviates some of their residual social guilt while upsetting the routine that feeds their self-absorption. At the end, the intruders removed, the four main characters gather center stage for a toast. That the toast makes happiness play second fiddle to disappointment and that the wine is flat and has to be spat out cannot hide the fact that Greenberg offers a happy ending. Stephen and Phoebe have found one another, and so have Peter and Drew, although presumably theirs is to be a spiritual union—more no sex than safe sex. To cure the social ills, Stephen and his friends are about to embark on an enterprise to build homes for the homeless. By comparison to this folderol, the killing of Thurmond Stottle seems downright realistic. Add that, except for some of Drew's acid throwaways, there is little wit in *Eastern Standard*. If it comes to a choice between Larry L. King's platitudes and those of Richard Greenberg, I would prefer to be in Gus's bar listening to Thurmond sing "I Keep Waking Up with Strangers." But to each his own angst.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

TRUTH BY DROLLERY

'HIGH HOPES' & 'NEW YORK STORIES'

In Victoria's Britain, Disraeli once termed the rich and poor "two nations." In Margaret Thatcher's Britain, a new English film makes the same claim. *High Hopes* invokes the current prime minister, first, as a stage device: in the small flat of Cyril and Shirley, a downscale, bohemian, Marxist couple, "Thatcher" is the name of a thigh-level cactus to be avoided while turning a corner. This joke typifies the film's droll, round-about-the-house humor.

Cyril (Philip Davis), Shirley (Ruth Sheen), and Cyril's seventy-year-old mum (Edna Dore) make up the film's strong center. The couple is pictured realistically but tenderly; they squabble, get along, and joke together better than many other recent screen lovers. Shirley also looks the part: with a sweet, birdlike face, complete with overbite; glamour has clearly been sacrificed to sensitivity. Cyril's mother is also realistically drawn—worn down by age and poverty, nearly indifferent to attempts to humor her. "Mum" is the last tenant in some old public "council" flats that Thatcher's government turns over to yuppie real estate investors as tenants die.

High Hopes is a sad, real *Big Chill*. Some of its best moments

involve bleak recognitions of working-class defeat, especially when Cyril expresses his greatest fear, "becoming bitter."

Director Mike Leigh achieves good effects by allowing his ensemble to improvise their roles and by refashioning the script around their suggestions. The result is a powerful naturalism, in which lyrical, pathetic, and satiric notes blend. However, he should have controlled three actors better: Heather Tobias as Cyril's would-be yuppie sister and David Bamber and Leslie Nandille as a yuppie couple (the perfectly named Booth-Brains) who live next door to Mum. Their performances are shrill or silly, one-note caricatures, entertaining enough, but at odds with the film's naturalism. Leigh's legitimate impulse to lampoon often threatens to overwhelm him.

Still, *High Hopes* lacks the defects of such other anti-Thatcher satires as *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the charmingly titled *Sammie and Rosie Get Laid*. It has enough maturity to distance itself from left-wing infantilism, and satirizes it strongly in a tough exchange between Cyril and a younger Marxist. The film doesn't mistake a critique of current social norms for a rejection of the merit of all moral order. A scene at Karl Marx's grave at Highgate cemetery, for example, is the film's moral center: watch it if only to see a director tell *three* powerful truths at once.

There are eight million stories in the Naked City, but *New York Stories* contains, at most, only one good one. This is surprising, since *New York Stories* contains three films—each about forty minutes—by Woody Allen, Martin Scorsese, and Francis Ford Coppola. Charitably described, the three works are miniatures where one can watch classy directors at work—as Dr. Johnson said of sonneteers—carving heads on cherrystones. More accurately, they are a haute cinema version of talented kids sitting around until one of them finally says, "Hey, I know what to do: let's put on a show!"

This in itself wouldn't be such a bad idea if their execution weren't so uneven. The Coppola piece, "Life Without Zoe," has fine visual style, and Scorsese's "Life Lessons" looks interesting if familiar. Ironically, however, the worst looking of the minifilms is the only one that works dramatically, Allen's "Oedipus Wrecks." *New York Stories* is described as an anthology, and, to be fair, the forty minutes doesn't allow room for development. But some depth ought to be there: you do, finally, need a real story. Coppola and Scorsese don't have one.

Coppola's "Zoe" is a blatantly silly look at the life of a twelve-year-old Manhattan girl. This could be interesting; but it winds up pure decadence: the girl (Heather McComb) lives in the Sherry Netherland (the Plaza must be too downscale); she leaves Manhattan only for a suburban prep school (and when she misses the bus, hops a cab), and flirts with a young schoolmate, the spoiled son of a sheik. Zoe's father (Giancarlo Giannini) is a filthy rich flute player who's mostly off on tour; someday he's going to take her to Paris. No ordinary people show up here—except for service staff and a homeless person outside the Plaza whom Zoe treats to chocolate kisses. The scenes are pretty to watch, especially one costume party at the

sheik's place; the whole smacks of an oversize chocolate kiss.

Somewhat better is Martin Scorsese's "Life Lessons," in which Nick Nolte plays (snore) a Soho loft artist tormenting his studio assistant/mistress (Rosanna Arquette). Despite the new surface, Scorsese's work has much in common with Coppola's, especially an uneven blend of grandiose overstatement and narrow scope—with tight focus on the ever so unfascinating, by now absolutely conventional world of the artiste. True, Scorsese locates this downtown; not for him any chocolate kisses. But trips to Soho on screen have become so routine that they are as full of surprises as bingo night.

Naturally, Scorsese's hero is hyperbolic, part mad, driven both as a creator and lover; he's like a vampire sucking Arquette's lifeblood. As usual in all Scorsese films, tone wavers seriously; you're never sure if the portrait by Nolte is satire by the director or self-indulgence. In either case, the tale soon pales because of its clichéd character and lack of dramatic development; Arquette and Nolte repeat the same routine about four times, with the latter merely throwing some paint on canvases for brute emotional punctuation (he's an expressionist, if you hadn't guessed). The story was told much better, and long before it became completely clichéd, by Woody Allen in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, in vignettes between Barbara Hershey and Max von Sydow. The latter (up for an Oscar for *Pelle the Conqueror*) even endowed driveling Bohemianism with ironic nobility.

Allen's "Oedipus Wrecks," from its first shot, employs some familiar routines; it's also, like so many of his recent works, a one-joke film. But in this case it's too short to wear out its welcome, especially considering the rest of *New York Stories*. The tale even contains a lawyer and ad executive; ironically, Allen comes off as the most broadminded, least parochial, even least arty and Manhattanite of the three filmmakers. Mae Questal also delights as Allen's classic "Jewish mother"; as the title suggests, she has destructively mythic potential. It's fun, but small rain after drought.

TOM O'BRIEN

ART

THE SEERS OF SIENA

ARTISTS ANCHORED IN THE SACRED

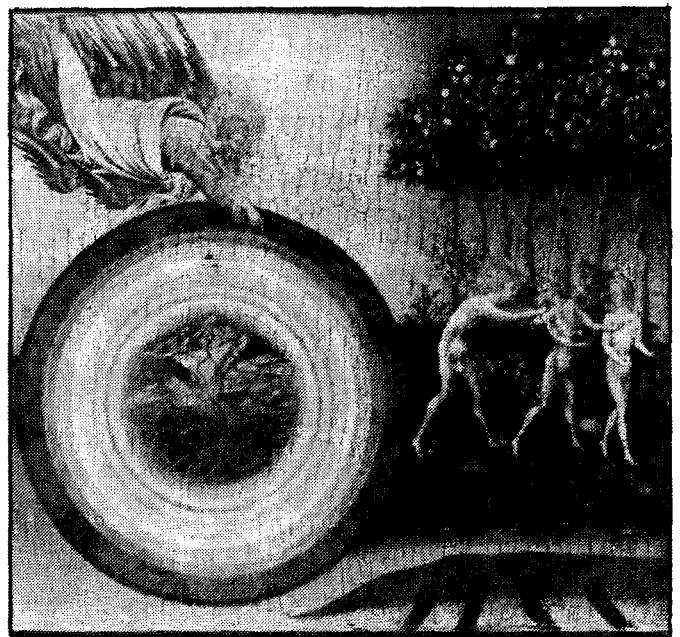
As critic John Russell wrote recently in the *New York Times*, the exhibition of paintings from Renaissance Siena at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City is a nonpareil among recent "blockbuster" art shows. The exhibition (December 20-March 19) and the eponymous catalogue published for the show offer the viewer a visual banquet and, equally, a feast of instruction in both art history and the history of culture, including the religious and devotional aspects of culture.

Some of the lessons are interestingly revisionist. The Met show focuses on Sienese art between 1420 and 1500. It was the sixteenth-century judgment of Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Eminent Painters*, a judgment still standard fare in art history books today, that the high point of the true renaissance in Sienese painting belonged to the previous century, with the work of Duccio, Simone Martini, and the Lorenzetti brothers.

Yet, just as the thirteenth-century painters Cimabue and Giotto were the heralds of the new Florentine art of the century after them, so Duccio and company were the forerunners of an artistic tradition that would also flourish in the fifteenth century. In both cities, an extra-cultural event, the calamitous Black Death (1348), proved a watershed event for artistic sensibilities. Its effects, or so it seems to me, are visible in the Met exhibition.

As I paged through the show's lush catalogue (*Paintings in Renaissance Siena*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, \$45) I could not but be struck with the intense religiosity of these paintings and, what is more, the preoccupation with the ascetic life and its deeply affective religiosity. Anyone who still has lingering images of the Renaissance as a pagan humanistic rejection of the medieval worldview would do well to take a long hard look at the art of this period. One will find, to be sure, some classical and/or mythological panels (usually from a large *cassone* for a private home) just as one can see religious panels that employ advanced techniques of perspective, decoration, architectural setting, and drama that give evidence of a sophistication well beyond the older tradition of Italo-Byzantine styles. Nonetheless, what one does not find is either the naturalism of a Florentine painter like Masaccio (died 1428) or the elaborate allegories of a Botticelli (died 1510)—to name just two Florentine painters who span roughly the same century.

Siena had its renaissance moments, most notably through the



The Creation and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise by Giovanni de Paolo, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

efforts of a native son, Enea Silvio Piccolomini who, as Pius II, reigned as pope from 1458 to 1464. He lavished the city (and his relatives) with monies to enhance the family name. Nonetheless, it was the culture of ascetic religion that most fed the city's artistic impulses. Siena, after all, was the home of Saint Catherine (died 1380); the place where San Bernardino (died 1444) preached some of his most ferocious sermons; and the locale of some important religious foundations: the Benedictines of Monte Oliveto; the Jesuati (later suppressed) whose spirituality was the continuing subject of suspicion because of its austerity; and a colony of Augustinian hermits who lived at nearby Leccetto.

This spiritual matrix, combined with Siena's economic problems and the disastrous aftermath of the 1348 plague, which carried off 60,000 of its 80,000 inhabitants, is part of the background for fifteenth-century Sienese art and its reiterated themes. Thus, Sassetta's altarpiece for the Wool Guild (the *Arte della Lana*), commissioned in 1423, was a tribute to the Blessed Sacrament and its principal feast, Corpus Christi. The Met show has some panels from this monumental work, including an exquisite one from the Vatican Museum. It shows St. Thomas Aquinas in prayer before a crucifix set in a highly detailed architectural setting (we view the saint through an imagined "open" wall). A more ominous panel of the burning of a heretic, may well echo the execution of John Huss who preached strong views against transubstantiation in Northern Europe.

From that same altarpiece there is a surviving scene of St. Anthony of the Desert beset by demons in an open landscape. Saint Anthony is a central figure in Christian ascetic hagiography, with a literary history that runs from the fourth-century *Life* by Athanasius down to Gustave Flaubert and an artistic tradition that occurs as late as Paul Cezanne and Salvador Dali. The saint appears in the Met exhibition in panels done by the Master of the Osservanza inspired by the *Life* of Athanasius. A number of these panels are easily viewable in American collections, but my favorite, from the State Museum of Berlin, is of the young Anthony at Mass. The Master of the Osservanza puts Anthony in a church setting which has been identified as a chapel of the Duomo in Siena (with its characteristic dark and light striations) which, as the catalogue notes, housed Simone Martini's famous *Annunciation* (now in the Uffizi Museum in Florence) in the fifteenth century. Thus the Master uses an anachronistic setting in order to show both the contemporaneity of the saint and to imply a tribute to a past master of Sienese art.

One of the truly fine painters of this period is Giovanni di Paolo (died 1482) who was a master illuminator of books (including Dante's *Commedia*) and an accomplished narrative painter who worked for various religious orders in Siena. Giovanni's most extraordinary work (it is in the Met's permanent collection) is of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. Between the swooping figure of God at the upper left of the panel and the departing couple hurried off by the angel on the right, there is a vast brilliant disk which, upon closer examination, appears to be the planetary system (of the zodiac) and a "God's eye" view of our earth in which the tops of mountains and the course of rivers are evident. God touches this

great disk so one sees quickly that the artist has, simultaneously, given us the scene of creation and the denouement of the Genesis story with the exile of the first parents. The exquisite character of the panel—the hand of the accomplished miniaturist is here—is only revealed on close inspection of both the created cosmos and the richly detailed garden beside it. This small panel (46 x 52 cm.) gives us the cosmos writ both large and small.

Giovanni di Paolo also painted scenes from the life of Saint Catherine of Siena, the pride of the city and one of only two women (Teresa of Avila is the other) who bear the title "Doctor of the Church." The Met show has no less than ten scenes from Catherine's life, all from an altarpiece which has been dispersed for nearly two hundred years. Space forbids full description of these narrative pieces. One that is particularly striking shows St. Catherine dictating to Raymond of Capua (a Dominican friar who, in life, served both as her amanuensis and biographer). Catherine almost floats above the pavement of a Gothic paneled room where Raymond sits at his writer's bench while Christ, surrounded by angels, gently breaks through the architecture in a gesture of benediction and inspiration.

What struck me most about the art of this show was its sense of the sacred; its echoes of the international Gothic style which still exerted an influence from the North; and its intermingling of the inherited mysteries of the faith set in contemporary scenes. This is an art anchored in the old legends of the saints and the contemplative exegesis of the Scriptures.

Such analogies are suspect but if I were to characterize the art of this period I would be inclined to see it as a visual rendering of the tradition of monastic theology rather than that of the theology of the schoolmen. These paintings are not, strictly speaking, icons, i.e., windows into the world of eternity before which we gaze. They are more like narratives to which we "listen" visually as the Gospel is proclaimed and the great deeds of the saints are recounted. This is *lectio divina* in tempera.

The most interesting thing about this show, apart from the intrinsic merit of the works themselves, is that the curators have managed to assemble scattered panels from various museums so that the narratives of some major altarpieces can be seen in the order in which they were first set. In that way, the careful viewer is able to see an ensemble rather than single scenes hanging on widely separated museum walls.

The Met show will not travel, which is a pity, but the catalogue, with excellent essays by three noted scholars of the period, is sumptuously illustrated (distributed by Harry Abrams, Inc.) and well annotated. With few exceptions, the most striking panels in the show are not a great deal larger than the generous color illustrations in the catalogue. One does not encounter the paintings as such but, as a second-best ploy, one can study the crisp plates in detail. This is something I have done a good deal, both for the pleasure they afford and for the instruction they grant.

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

Lawrence S. Cunningham teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame. He lived in Tuscany and is an admirer of its art and culture.

A record that survives death

Madeleine L'Engle is best known for the 1962 novel *A Wrinkle in Time*, still in print, after it was initially rejected again and again, a Newberry Prize winner and an all-time best seller for Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. Since her first novel, *Small Rain* (1945), she has published thirty-four books of fiction and non-fiction. In *The Crosswicks Trilogy*—*A Circle of Quiet* (1972), *The Summer of Great-Grandmother* (1974), and *The Irrational Season* (1985), named after the author's Connecticut farmhouse—L'Engle wrote a journal-like account of the everyday wife, mother, writer, daughter, and Christian behind these prolific writings. Of all the accounts that have appeared to date, by and about contemporary working mothers, *The Crosswicks Trilogy* affords the fullest experience of the professional woman's balancing act. *Crosswicks* continues as an underground hit among women who have not stopped reading as they have taken on everything else.

In certain details, the world of *Two-Part Invention: The Story of a Marriage* will be familiar territory to readers of the trilogy. But the tone and thrust of L'Engle's latest book achieve an austere and moving power that is unique in her entire published canon. *Two-Part Invention* is the memoir of her nearly forty-five-year marriage to Hugh Franklin, a successful stage and television actor who died of cancer in the fall of 1987. The title is well-chosen, considering that the book follows two lives from the time of their first meeting to their final separation. The narrative swings gracefully between the wife's memories of both married harmony and the dissonance generated by difficult circumstance and different temperaments; it moves back and forth be-

TWO-PART INVENTION:

The Story of a Marriage

Madeleine L'Engle

Farrar Straus & Giroux, \$18.95, 232 pp.

Susan Cahill

tween the comforting past and the unyielding, unforgiving present: the "progress" of the dying husband's disease. Simultaneously, as in a musical invention, we hear the wife-composer's attention to the deathbed and her rendition of a particular and happy marriage bed.

Hugh Franklin is radiant here, re-created through his wife's art as a wonderfully alive gentleman: impetuous, smart, decent, a man with perfect timing. Madeleine L'Engle was a freelance writer and understudy, living in New York City, when she first saw Franklin. It was at a rehearsal

of *The Cherry Orchard* starring Eva La Gallienne and Joseph Schildkraut. Franklin was playing Petya Trofimov: "I saw a very tall, thin young man with black hair and enormous, very blue eyes. I had never seen such eyes.... I realized that this young man was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous...." After that first rehearsal they talked for ten hours, ate hamburgers, and the young understudy, "full of joy," was certain she had "met the man I want to marry." Four decades later, having lived together through the lean years of her rejection slips and his part-time employment, through difficult pregnancies and births and disappointing business choices, the enchanted girl's first vision is, in the voice of the seasoned wife, still told in a major key: Hugh is still "Beautiful to behold, with his white hair, patrician features, and those extraordinary blue eyes."

Physical beauty and attraction is only one chord in a long marriage, dominant or subdominant depending on a matter of other changing rhythms. But one hears its resonance—the man and woman's delight in matter—always in the background of *Two-Part Invention*. Stories about a successful marriage are especially intriguing in our age. How, ask the counselors and the counseled, does a good one work? Its dynamics, as described here by the wife, Madeleine L'Engle Franklin, have much to do with the consolations of the flesh that in turn enliven the spirits of the lovers. Hugh Franklin's gallant beauty and his sense of humor and generosity are of one piece for his wife. She, in turn, is a woman of high wit, with a down-to-earth honesty and a capacity for the pleasures of a good man's company, children and grandchildren, food, work, New England, New York City. On its deepest level, *Two-Part Invention* works as compelling proof of the incantational principle. That is one way of praising this book: as a record of

Our love has been anything but perfect and anything but static. Inevitably there have been times when one of us has outrun the other and has had to wait patiently for the other to catch up. There have been times when we have misunderstood each other, demanded too much of each other, been insensitive to the other's needs. I do not believe there is any marriage where this does not happen. The growth of love is not a straight line, but a series of hills and valleys. I suspect that in every good marriage there are times when love seems to be over. Sometimes these desert lines are simply the only way to the next oasis, which is far more lush and beautiful after the desert crossing than it could possibly have been without it.

—Madeleine L'Engle
Two-Part Invention

how love works and grows and survives death—the temporary deaths along the way, and the final, absolute last breath at the end.

The author, a believing Christian, has the spiritual resources of prayer and sacrament which refine her perceptions and deepen her experience of all creation, including her marriage and family. Her religious vision is as seductive as her story of the marriage. It infuses her memoir with a specificity and intelligence that make this a valuable book, especially for married people. For it makes the lived ecstasy as well as “that silent communion which deepens between two people as they live together for many years,” palpable and utterly precious. (In so doing it settles the hash of the green-eyed, sour-grapes-mockers who have so nastily and theoretically depicted marriage as the enemy of ecstasy.) At the end, trying to make sense, or at least peace with this two-part story of love and suffering, the author quotes Julian of Norwich: “Wouldst thou witten thy Lord’s meaning in these things? Wit it well. Love was his meaning.”

Though the theme of the loss of Hugh to cancer has run through the book from the beginning, it is Lady Julian’s vision, embraced by the author, that makes the painful ending of the book bearable. The death of Hugh Franklin, who in his hospital bed is for his wife “beautiful as an El Greco saint,” is for her an “amputation.” His sweetness has animated her existence. “I am who I am because of our years together, freed by his acceptance and love of me,” she writes in the first days of grief.

Together, husband and wife lived the words of Conrad Aiken that Hugh Franklin had spoken to Madeleine L’Engle just before he proposed: “Music I heard with you was more than music/And bread I broke with you was more than bread.”

Two-Part Invention makes their union believable without recourse to one romantic thrill or any lying flourishes. The book is worthy of the man who inspired it. It is also L’Engle’s most beautiful book to date, a many-layered weave of sexual and domestic contentment, artistic achievement, religious faith, and sane politics. Radiantly profane as well as sacred, *Two-Part Invention* is a book of wisdom. □

TREATING THE SYMPTOMS

IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

Charles Murray

Simon and Schuster, \$19.95 303 pp.

POOR SUPPORT: POVERTY IN THE AMERICAN FAMILY

David T. Ellwood

Basic Books, \$19.95, 243 pp.

**Stephanie G. Gould
& John L. Palmer**

Here are two books that both deal, broadly speaking, with the role of the federal government in social policymaking. (Ellwood’s book is narrowly confined to policies affecting families with children, while Murray is ultimately concerned with “how society is to be organized so that it best serves ‘the happiness of the people.’” Still, the subject matter—how to think about the federal role in social life—is essentially the same.)

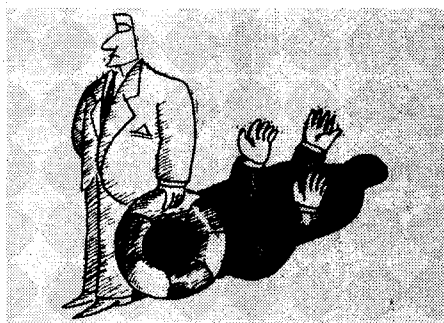
Both are good books: thoughtful and well-written. Knowing the past work of both authors and their professional homes (Murray at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research and Ellwood at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government), the reader might expect to find in these two books ground for dialogue between the conservative and liberal poles of thought. That is, one might expect to find responsible position statements which could serve to identify opposing premises, conflicting

assumptions, disputes over evidence—argument over which could serve to move the dialogue along.

The fact that it is so hard to find the ground for dialogue—that, despite their manifest talents and sincerity, the two authors do not seem to be talking to each other at all—suggests a central truth of American political life: social policy advances not in dramatic response to clear-cut ideological confrontation and resolution, but, rather incrementally, as a welter of mutually inconsistent ideas percolates through, and is transmuted by, the body politic. The “Reagan Revolution” notwithstanding, the clash of ideas reverberates only dully in the American political arena, muffled, as it were, by the noises of the crowd. Thus we should not expect either of these books to stimulate a radical reorientation of American social policy.

Yet it is possible in these books to see some evolution of the two poles of thought. Murray, for example, has written a very different book from his earlier *Losing Ground*, hailed by conservatives as documentation of the self-defeatism of welfare policies and damned by liberals for its use (abuse) of statistical analysis. In *In Pursuit*, Murray eschews elaborate policy analysis (though not his earlier conclusions based on such analysis) in favor of philosophy. The tone is much more “Let us speculate together” than “Let me prove to you,” and the intent is much more to open the doors of conservative thought than to slam shut those of liberal thought.

Murray argues that we will formulate much more creative and fruitful social policies if we conceive of the role of the federal government as “enabling individuals to pursue happiness,” rather than as some more instrumentally defined goal (such as reducing poverty, increasing housing supply, or whatever). He contends that we have been seduced away from this original formulation of our governmental purpose in part by the power of the social sciences to measure and



evaluate results: "happiness" being the elusive notion it is, we have chosen to do, in the policy arena, what lends itself best to quantified certification as success or failure and ignored the not-readily-quantifiable side-effects of policies that might actually be destructive of human happiness. His choice of words throughout this discussion is self-consciously conservative: "enable" rather than ensure; "individuals" rather than groups; "pursue" rather than achieve; and "happiness" rather than some egalitarian formulation of a public good.

Murray spends the first half of the book lodging the notion of happiness in the Western philosophic tradition and laying out, in Abraham Maslow's terms, "enabling conditions" for its pursuit. His four conditions—material resources, safety, self-respect, and enjoyment—are consonant with the "values" identified by Ellwood as critical to the success of any American welfare system and, indeed, up to a point (as Murray notes) his argument is compatible with either liberal or conservative policy conclusions. What determines where you come down on policy questions, on how to realize the "enabling conditions," depends on your view of human nature—a topic Ellwood explicitly declines to take up. Murray explicates—but wisely makes no attempt to "prove"—his view of humanity as individually benign but collectively dangerous and proceeds (in the last part of the book) to speculate intriguingly about the consequences of his arguments for thinking about policy.

His arguments are often more suggestive than compelling, and there are certainly some logical nits to pick. How you get from the definition of happiness as "the-good-that-one-seeks-as-an-end-in-itself-and-for-no-other-reason" in chapter one, for example, to the notion of "justified happiness" in chapter two ("in the context of this book, 'justified' with regard to happiness says that it is not enough to feel good; you must have a plausible *reason* for feeling good [emphasis added]") is a particularly bumpy ride, which not even Murray's fluid prose can cushion. But bumps aside, the effort to link, in accessible language, the philosophical heritage of the Founding Fathers

I am suggesting that if policy planners—diagnosticians?—are to be successful, they must think in terms of solutions that permit a naturally robust organism to return to health. Does the nation suffer from schools that don't teach? The task is not to figure out better teaching techniques, we've known how to teach children for millennia. The task is to figure out what is keeping us from doing what we already know how to do.

—Charles Murray
In Pursuit of Happiness and Good Government

with alternative approaches to contemporary policy issues is a creative and laudable one. That conservatives are far more likely than liberals to make such efforts these days accounts in part for why there is so little real dialogue between the two. We suspect that Mr. Murray will be faulted by liberal critics of this book not so much for what he says—that is likely to be dismissed as nostalgia—as for what he does not: the book makes no attempt to evaluate the light that twentieth-century history and social science scholarship might shed on his philosophical premises. While we too might have preferred a little less of Aristotle and a little more acknowledgment of the forces that have moved all modern democracies in the direction of the welfare state, we think it would be a shame—yet another missed opportunity for dialogue—to dismiss this very good book in favor of one that Mr. Murray didn't write.

David Ellwood's book, *Poor Support*, will undoubtedly engender less controversy, both because it is an exemplary product of a more familiar genre, policy analysis, and because it represents a kind of liberal/conservative consensus view of the evils of the current welfare system. *Poor Support* focuses on the problem of poverty in the American family and the failure of the welfare system, particularly the AFDC program, to address it effectively. Ellwood's primary thesis is clearly stated in his introductory chapter and persuasively argued throughout. The welfare system treats the symptoms rather than the causes of poverty. In doing so, it

creates inevitable conflicts in incentives and values that undermine its credibility and effectiveness. Only by replacing welfare with policies which focus explicitly on the root causes of poverty—lack of a job, too low wages, single-parenthood, or more immediate personal crises—can we avoid the difficult dilemmas which plague our current welfare system and thereby place government in its proper role of reinforcing deeply held societal values and facilitating self-support.

The central role Ellwood assigns to "value" in the design and evaluation of public programs—not a common casting in most works of policy analysis by economists—differentiates this book from "liberal" analyses of similar topics. Ellwood postulates four basic tenets of

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American belief that policy analysts and policy makers ignore at their peril: the autonomy of the individual; the virtue of work; the primacy of the family; and the desire for and sense of community. By emphasizing one value over the other, Ellwood argues, recent critics of social policy have "found it possible to prescribe coherent and plausible changes in policy" (e.g., Murray, in *Losing Ground*, by emphasizing individual autonomy).

The problem with such approaches, however, is that Americans would like to avoid compromising on any of these dimensions. Thus, poverty policy inevitably confronts "conundrums": "the work-security conundrum" (when you give people money, food, or housing, you reduce pressure on them to work or care for themselves); the "assistance-family-structure conundrum" (giving greater aid to single-parent families encourages families to split up and unmarried women to have babies); and the "targeting-isolation conundrum" (the more you target aid on the most needy, the more you tend to isolate them from the economic and political mainstream). Designing public policies which surmount these conundrums is the essential task of social policy, according to Ellwood, and the lesson to be

learned from history is that the closer we move toward a system that makes judgments about the causes of poverty, and the further away we move from pure welfare programs, the simpler this task becomes.

The remainder, and vast bulk, of the book contains a largely descriptive analysis of the recent transformation of American families and poverty among two-parent and single-parent families, in general, and among ghetto families, in particular. It is noteworthy for its clarity and its careful integration of relevant facts and findings from other social science research, traditional policy analysis, and Ellwood's earlier insights about the role of values.

What emerges in the final chapter are four overall conclusions about the major causes of poverty, from which follow five policy/program prescriptions (some old, some new) that most thoughtful liberals and conservatives would probably agree represent a major improvement over our current welfare system. What also emerges is a prescription for an expanded role for the federal government and with it a price tag of \$20 to \$30 billion a year, about whose desirability most liberals and conservatives would almost certainly disagree.

"that Jews consistently and persistently misapprehend the perceptions and overstate the bigotry of others." An example: Fifty-three percent of the Jews questioned in a 1982 Daniel Yankelovitch poll thought that a majority of non-Jews agreed with the statement "Jews have too much power in the United States." In fact, only 20 percent did. After the Holocaust, it is difficult to be realistic about how Jews are perceived.

But there is a deeper rift than this. "We believe," writes Fein, "that God is central to Judaism, and we call ourselves Jews, but we are without God. This startling disjunction is a fracture of compound consequence, one that we seek to ignore but that necessarily haunts us. It is our collective secret, of which we never speak nor even whisper—perhaps not even to survey researchers. It is as if we have decided that some secrets are too disturbing to utter, as if we have agreed to live our lives as Jews in the presence of a cosmic wink."

Fein's deepest struggle is with this dilemma. How and why does a nonbelieving Jew remain a Jew and as deeply committed to the survival of the Jewish people and—in a sense—of Judaism as his believing brethren?

Fein does not really tell us why he insists on remaining a committed Jew but he tells us how he does it. He does it by freely choosing to associate himself with the myth of revelation at Sinai. He is aware of the "as-ifness" of his choice, but he is not impeded by this awareness. Faith, as he understands it, "is belief in the actuality, the factness of a thing or event." Faithfulness, on the other hand, "is concerned not with the thing's actuality, but with my actualization of it." Fein does not have faith, but he chooses to engage in faithfulness.

The strength of Fein's position is its popularity. Were he formulating the Jewishness of a small minority of alienated Jewish intellectuals, one could argue with him on various levels. But Fein has tapped into a kind of mainstream American Judaism or Jewishness. Fein does not argue that this "as-if" Judaism is superior to the traditional brand. He argues that it is so pervasive that it must be taken seriously.

It is worth noting that Fein does not opt

SONS & DAUGHTERS OF ABRAHAM

WHERE ARE WE?

The Inner Life of America's Jews

Leonard Fein

Harper and Row, \$19.95, 329 pp.

Michael Wyschogrod

The old Yiddish saying, "It is difficult to be a Jew," has rarely been false and, curiously enough, it is not even false when applied to the current condition of American Jewry. On the face of it, this should not be so. As everyone knows, the American Jewish story is one of the great American success stories, economically, socially, and politi-

cally. Above all, serious anti-Semitism in this country has been on the decline for decades now, though it is by no means non-existent. And yet, the American Jew who emerges from the pages of Leonard Fein's study is not at ease. He is beset by a number of inner rifts which make it difficult to enjoy fully the blessings of the Golden Land. Fein's book probes those rifts.

First, there is the Holocaust. The better things are for American Jews, the more painful the question: Why did the Jews of Europe deserve to be eliminated while we thrive? Psychologically, this can be answered by maintaining that things are not as good here as they seem. Fein points out

for the secular Jewishness to which many Israeli Jews are attracted. American Jews live in an environment in which being Jewish is understood primarily in religious terms. Those who wish to retain their Jewish identity must therefore formulate a largely religious self-definition, even if the religious language used masks an essentially secular orientation.

The final rift this book explores is that between the well-established liberalism of American Jews and the perception that it is a liberalism on the wane. Fein argues that American Jews are, proportionately, as liberal as they have ever been and the shift away from liberalism is not greater than the general shift in the population. Since Jews started from a far more liberal base line, they are still more liberal than the population as a whole, though, in absolute terms, there has been some shift to the right. As Milton Himmelfarb has pointed out, Jews still earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans.

Fein is a liberal American agnostic who is determined to remain a Jew. To do so, he must come to terms with two realities with which he is not particularly comfortable: God and some degree of Zionist nationalism. His life would be easier without these burdens but he knows that were he to shed them he would be reading himself out of Jewish destiny. So he struggles with these unpalatable legacies of the Jewish past, swallowing them in part, reinterpreting the rest and, in the process, being left less than totally happy. It is difficult to be a Jew.

The key to the problem is Fein's determination to remain an active Jew. Everything else follows from this basic choice and one wonders why he makes it. It can be denied, of course, that it is a choice. Again and again, Jews have learned that they cannot assimilate, that they remain assimilated Jews, or agnostic Jews, or non-identified Jews, but Jews nevertheless. If this is the way it is, if there is no escape anyway, one might as well make a virtue of necessity and choose to remain a Jew.

But I do not think this is Fein's agenda. In America it is possible to assimilate or, even without full-scale assimilation, to have so little interest in Jews and Judaism that full-scale assimilation cannot be far

behind. But Fein's interest in things Jewish is unlimited and that is something of a mystery.

Karl Barth used to argue that unbelief should never be taken at face value. This is probably even more applicable in the case of a Jew as committed to the survival of the Jewish people as is Fein. One comes away with the impression that the unbelief resides at a relatively superficial level of the personality while the "as-if" Judaism goes very deep.

The rabbis of the Talmud taught that the commandments ought to be fulfilled without any ulterior motives, but it is better to fulfill them out of ulterior motives than not to fulfill them at all, because if a

person starts by obeying the commandments out of ulterior motives, in time he will come to obey them without any ulterior motives. This is probably even more applicable to "as-if" Judaism. If one pretends long enough, the pretense might become a reality.

The problem is that fewer and fewer Leonard Feins are being produced by the American Jewish community. It is easier not to have to wrestle with the dilemmas outlined in this book by attaching one's deepest loyalty to the whole human family rather than the family of Abraham. And in America it is really possible to exchange the smaller family for the larger one. □

LIFE OF THE SPELL-CASTER

JOURNEY CONTINUED
An Autobiography
Alan Paton

Scribner's, \$22.55, 308 pp.

Arthur J. Moore

When Alan Paton died last year at the age of eighty-five, he seemed to many a man who had outlived his time. None of his writings had matched the great impact of his masterwork, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, published in 1948. The multiracial, South African Liberal party, which he helped found and head, was his venture into politics until its demise in 1968, after which he retired into private life. More saddening to some was Paton's increasing conservatism—his vocal opposition to economic sanctions and his willingness to accept the Botha government's assurance that it was working to eliminate apartheid. He was seen by many as an increasingly embittered old man.

This second volume of Paton's autobiography, published posthumously, offers an opportunity to test these perceptions. The first part of his autobiography, *Towards the Mountain* (1980), covered his

life up until 1948. The two works should be read together.

Paton picked 1948 as the dividing point because in that year the two decisive events in his public life took place—the publication of the novel that made him an international celebrity and the coming to power in South Africa of the Afrikaner party, sworn to establish *apartheid*. This break is a useful device but it tends to reinforce the stereotype of the rise and fall of Alan Paton. One cannot really understand the complexity of the man without knowing the forces which shaped him and the motives out of which he acted.

The first of these shaping forces was his religious perspective. A Christian of the Anglican persuasion, Paton wrote that

CONTEST

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"my religion has never held a great place for dogma...it has been largely concerned with the dedication of my will," a very Anglican remark. (Nonetheless, it was his religious perspective which shaped both his writing and his public career.) Reinhold Niebuhr, who had a tremendous impact on Paton, called *Cry, the Beloved Country* a book with "a genuine religious Christian content." Many of his writings, such as a series of meditations on the prayer of St. Francis, *Instrument of Thy Peace* (1967), are on specifically religious themes. Paton agrees with Malcolm Muggeridge that he is more of a poet than a novelist but the real tip-off is a remark that Barbara Ward made after Paton gave the Harvard commencement address in 1971. "It sounded like the Bible," she said. Indeed, Paton's novels have the ring of the King James version about them.

It was his "dedication of the will" that led Paton into politics with the founding of the Liberal party in 1953, an attempt to establish a political party with multiracial membership. The strong anti-Communist feelings of a number of the party's leaders made any sort of cooperation with groups such as the African National Congress (and its white counterpart, the Congress of Democrats) almost impossible. It remained a heterogeneous group during its fifteen-year existence, with some of its members drawn off into violence, but many considered it politically naive. Still, it was an honorable attempt to deal with an increasingly intractable situation.

Paton's own political view is indicated by his insistence that what saved the United States from the fate of South Africa was

The events of the last forty years which I have described in this book could not have happened in the democracies of the West. That's not because the people of the West are better than we are. The most self-righteous of the Americans are not better than we are. I repeat that they should go down on their knees and thank God for their Constitution, their Bill of Rights, and their Supreme Court.

—Alan Paton
Journey Continued

the existence of a written Constitution and Bill of Rights and an independent judiciary. He remembers the time when the U.S. was the nation thought likely to fail the racial test and South Africa the one likely to succeed. He remembers the lesson of his mentor, Reinhold Niebuhr, "the wisest man I ever knew," that individuals may be saints but institutions or societies never can.

This insight helped Paton to avoid demonizing the South African government even when he profoundly disagreed with its policies. It helps to explain his conviction that the Botha government knows that *apartheid* is untenable and is trying in a groping fashion to extricate the country from that policy. This is a conviction far too optimistic for most people these days. It underlies, however, Paton's rejection of sanctions and disinvestment. (There is a certain irony here. I interviewed Paton at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Evanston in 1954 and remember his firm assertion that the real basis of *apartheid* was economic. Only by removing its economic benefits to the ruling whites, would there develop the political will to end *apartheid*.)

There is another reason, I believe, for Paton's political reactions in his old age. He loved South Africa passionately. That mostly took the form of loving the countryside physically and hating the form that the society took. But as the world increasingly treated South Africa as a pariah and its white ruling class as monsters, Paton resented this ostracism, even though he had long predicted that it would happen. It is instructive to compare Paton with Beyers Naudé, the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed clergyman whose quest for justice has led him from a position of privilege in the ruling community to an identification with the South African blacks. This has cost Naudé dearly in personal terms but has made him more able to identify with today's struggle. Neither Paton's theology nor his personality allowed him to make that journey. Again, a reference to Niebuhr is illuminating. In a 1955 speech at the Kent School, Niebuhr gave a somber assessment of American society, saying, "It's a mess." But, he adds, "I like it." That might well be Paton on South Africa.

Journey Continued, it should be noted,

is not a book devoted exclusively to large subjects. Paton can devote as much time and attention to the story of a car ride with American friends whose young son was surreptitiously pinching him until he got a large adult pinch back as he does to the headline events. There is a story instructive to Americans: In 1955 he was detained by the U.S. Immigration Service for his wartime membership in the Friends of the Soviet Union, whose patrons included Dwight Eisenhower (then president of the United States), and whose purpose was to send medical supplies to the USSR during World War II. There are interesting stories of why Paton thought Maxwell Anderson had imposed his own philosophy in "Lost in the Stars" and of the filming of *Cry, the Beloved Country* by the Korda brothers.

Alan Paton may perhaps be fated to be one of those people, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote a book so compelling that they were never able to get out from under its reputation. As a person, he was much more than that, as his autobiography makes clear. And, too, which of us would resist going down in history as having cast the spell of that famous beginning: "There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it." □

REVIEWS

SUSAN CAHILL is the author of the novel, *Earth Angels*, and editor of the three-volume series, *Women & Fiction*.

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MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD, professor of philosophy at Baruch College, CUNY, and director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Relations of the American Jewish Congress, is the author of *The Body of Faith: Judaism and Corporeal Election*.

AUTHUR J. MOORE, a long-time contributor to *Commonweal*, was formerly editor of *New World Outlook* magazine.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 194)

unfortunately rare to see those two currents worked out in detail that McCabe's book should be celebrated. Cunningham is correct in saying that "What [McCabe] does very well is draw on the tradition in new and innovative ways."

C. G. ESTABROOK

Getting the Vatican's ear

Cleveland, Ohio

To the Editors: Though I appreciate the humor expressed in your cartoon ["The Cologne Declaration," February 24] about the Vatican getting an 800 number, there might be some wisdom there. Maybe...those who cannot "afford" to be heard in Rome could use the toll-free line to be heard and counted as Catholics. But then again, they may not be considered as "Catholic" as those who can afford it.

MICHAEL D. AUSPERK

Thanks to God

Shelburne, Vt.

To the Editors: Thanks for the helpful prayer essays ["Prayer: When? How? Why?" February 10]. Theologian Wright could admit to a little more bewilderment. Has not the Holocaust taught us that there are circumstances in which God seems to be powerless? Wright still assumes (as several others do) God's maleness. Also, I feel that we children of God must eventually learn not to say "please," just "thank you." Does a parent like to hear a fervent "please" or "have mercy" when one is already doing infinitely more than the child could dream or ask and is already acting out of endless mercy? And doesn't God need comforting? No one mentioned that.

WILLIAM CLEARY

What is petition?

San Francisco, Calif.

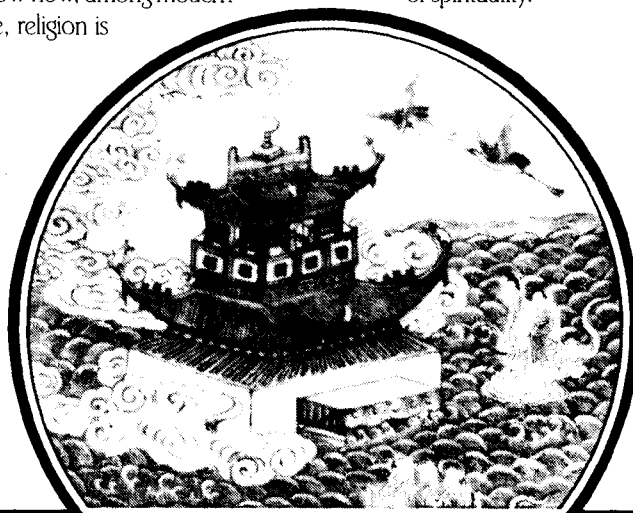
To the Editors: Thank you for the February 10 issue on prayer. John H. Wright's article, "When we Pray," was a particularly helpful analysis of what is really

Hans Küng brings new understanding to a long-neglected religious tradition

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going on in prayer of petition. At a time when many are embarrassed that Jesus taught the Our Father—which they interpret as a form of magic or manipulation—it is comforting to see that systematic theology can provide depth and direction to prayer.

I only wish that Wright had added that petition is an act of humility, an acknowledgment of total and continual dependence on the One who gives life and breath and being at every moment. We need, and so we ask. We ask, and we receive. We receive in proportion to our need and our asking.

FRANCIS J. BUCKLEY, S.J.

Prayer in our age

Seattle, Wash.

To the Editors: I appreciate your articles on the relevance of prayer to modern life ["Prayer: When? How? Why?" February 10], but found them largely disconnected from what seem to me the main issues about prayer in our age. In particular, I found John Wright's ivory tower analysis wholly dis-incarnate.

I am a layman working for the Jesuits' center for peace and justice in the Northwest. The questions I must face in my daily faith life are much more of the nature of: How can we hope for a hearing from God given the sinful structures of our lives, both personal and social? How can we tap the limitless, creative power of God to make the *basileia*, the reign of God, a reality in our world?

To these points, I personally find helpful the reflections of Ched Myers in his recent, brilliant analysis of Mark's Gospel, *Binding the Strong Man* (Orbis, 1989). In seeing the disciples' despair at being unable to cast out the demons that have held a child bound "since childhood," Jesus affirms that this kind can only be cast out "with prayer" [Mk 9:14-29].

Myers writes in his study that, "To pray is to learn to believe in a transformation of self and world....Is not prayer the intensely personal struggle within each disciple, and among us collectively, to resist the despair and distractions that cause us to practice unbelief, to abandon the way of Jesus?"

WES HOWARD

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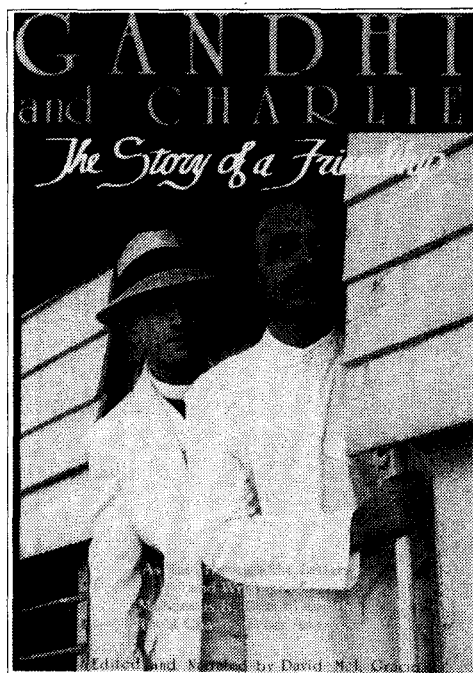
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The pope is an "influential ally" for progressives.

—John Kenneth Galbraith

That the pope in Rome, a former manual worker, is actually a political progressive and a principled critic of capitalism — so much so as to make U.S. liberals seem like neoconservatives — is one of our mass media's best kept secrets.

In *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul said that capital must serve labor and called for workers' co-ownership and co-management of the means of production. In his more recent encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, he equated Western capitalism and Eastern Communism, and condemned both evenhandedly — placing the Catholic Church well to the "left" of the Democratic Party. He spoke of the Church's preferential love for the poor and characterized the security concerns of both East and West as "unacceptably exaggerated," adding that resources which should be spent on alleviating misery in the Third World are wasted on arms and imperialistic schemes.

Happily, a few sensitive souls are getting the message. On the strength of *Sollicitudo*, Norman Mailer proposed this literary pope for membership in PEN. John Kenneth Galbraith announced that "we must all applaud our greatly influential mentor, guide and ally." Murray Kempton, pointing to Church activism in the Philippines, South Korea, Poland, and Latin America, said that "even unbelievers like myself have to concede that the Catholic Church has become the steadiest, and in many places the only, defender of human rights the wide world can

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